



UNIVERSITAT DE
BARCELONA

Disability Justice is Collective Liberation: Pragmatist Approaches to Tactile Aesthetics and Reorganizational Tactics in Access Arts

Àger Pérez Casanovas

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DOCTORAL THESIS



Disability Justice is Collective Liberation:
Pragmatist Approaches to Tactile Aesthetics and Reorganizational
Tactics in Access Arts

By

Àger Pérez Casanovas

A dissertation submitted for the degree of

Doctor

Doctoral Program in Citizenship and Human Rights

Philosophy Department, Universitat de Barcelona

Supervised and tutored by Dr. Núria Sara Miras Boronat

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To be sensitive is to perceive finely. A sensitive instrument.

To be sensitive is to overreact.

*One description of electrons is as particles at the edge of a mostly
empty atom, hypersensitive to touch.*

(Matthew Rader, *Visual Inspection*, 2019: 59)

*To touch to vibrating response the noble fibre in each man,
to pull these many fibres, fragile, impalpable and constantly breaking,
as they are, into one impulse,
to develop that mere impulse through its feeble and tentative stages into action,
is no easy task, but lateral progress is impossible without it.*

(Jane Addams, *A Modern Lear*, 1912)

To my mother.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation is to provide a theoretical framework where the double significance of Disability Justice artistic practices – aesthetic and political – can be accounted for, and to show the emancipatory and coalitional potential of DJ as a place for collective liberation that interlaces social justice movements in solidarity and care bonds. To do so, the thesis elaborates on the intersections between Pragmatist politics and ethics, and the artistic practices that are flourishing in the discipline of Access Art, which constitutes a central territory of activism for Disability Justice. This connection revolves around a recovery of embodiment, which is paradigmatically exemplified by an attention to the sense of touch.

Therefore, three steps are performed. In the first one, we undertake an archaeology of touch which shows how Western philosophy has been shaped by an Ocularcentric conception of knowledge and culture that has led to a tactile amnesia which is used to reinforce ableist structures that leave non-visual learners behind in many territories, and emphatically in museums. From this, we argue that paying attention to embodiment and touch constitutes a shift of standpoint with deep philosophical implications, which entails restructuring the sensory regimes ordering how we inhabit the world. Secondly, the ten Disability Justice principles are presented as the guiding regulations that establish how this reordering of the world is performed in Access Art practices. The function of each principle is examined in relation to precedent theoretical frameworks that come from Feminist Pragmatism and Critical Theory's ideas of community, interdependence and care. Thirdly, a series of case studies built around the key work of Carmen Papalia in Access Arts are narrated to show how different practitioners deploy reorganizational tactics that aim at transformative justice actions by way of revolting everyday ways of sensing, saliently redirecting our attention to the broad senses of touch.

This thesis is framed in a broader project arguing that building bridges between the principles of Disability Justice and the tenets of critical Pragmatist theoretical frameworks provides a bidirectional enrichment for both fields: for Disability Justice activists and artists, existing frameworks provide a tradition in relation to which they can make sense of their praxis; and for the Pragmatist scholars, it enlivens the discipline by proving it useful to analyze and take charge of current oppressions, as well as affording a new standpoint from which new aspects become salient when we revisit classical texts.

Keywords: Disability Justice, Access Art, Ocularcentrism, Carmen Papalia, transformative justice, contemporary Pragmatism.

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Beauty is an access need.

(Rebel Fayola Rose, 2023)

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INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL DISABILITY STUDIES AS A STANDPOINT TO DEVELOP AN ANTI-OCULARCENTRIC SEMANTIC FIELD FOR TACTILE AESTHETICS

Throughout its history, aesthetics has been dominated by an obsession with images and metaphors of light (Levin, 1933, 1997; Jay, 1994). Vision has been the privileged field for aesthetic experience and appreciation, usually followed by hearing. This *sensory hierarchy* (Korsmeyer, 2015: 11-38) has been mirrored in a hierarchy of art forms, establishing the visual arts, literature, and music as the paradigm of the arts. For instance, in Hegel's *Lessons on Aesthetics* from his lectures in Heidelberg (1818) and Berlin (1820-1829), music is a superior medium, having surpassed visual arts as a more spiritual art form¹. Meanwhile, touch, taste, and smell have remained not only marginal but anathematized as the lower and impure senses.² This chapter explores the philosophical antecedents of this sensory hierarchy which was consolidated in Modernity and shaped the institutions of knowledge established since then – schools, universities, libraries, museums – according to that distribution of the senses. The world that is built around this value system and social epistemology is therefore built for visual learners first, and for hearing learners second.

Approaching the sensory hierarchy from the standpoint of Critical Disability Studies, we could explore how examining aesthetic experience from the sense of touch can enact a radical strategy of resistance because it challenges the *Ocularcentric*

¹One can find Hegel's analysis of music mostly in the second volume of his lectures on aesthetics (Hegel, 1975: 953). For a contemporary reading of his philosophy of music, see Johnson (1991).

²«In this matter we have already excluded touch, taste, and smell ... For by the sense of touch the individual subject, as a sensuous individual, is simply related to what is sensuously individual and its weight, hardness, softness, and material resistance. The work of art, however, is not purely sensuous, but the spirit appearing in the sensuous. Neither can a work of art be tasted as such, because taste does not leave its object free and independent but deals with it in a really practical way, dissolves and consumes it. A cultivation and refinement of taste is only possible and requisite in respect of foods and their preparation or of the chemical qualities of objects. But the *objet d'art* should be contemplated in its independent objectivity on its own account; true, it is there for our apprehension but only in a theoretical and intellectual way, not in a practical one, and it has no relation to desire or the will. As for smell, it cannot be an organ of artistic enjoyment either, because things are only available to smell in so far as they are in process and [their aroma is] dissipated through the air and its practical influence. Sight, on the other hand, has a purely theoretical relation to objects by means of light, this as it were non-material matter» (Hegel, 1975: 621-2).

*perspective*³ that has characterized aesthetics as a philosophical discipline since its early formulation with Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, published in 1750 (Baumgarten, 2007).

Nonvisual learner is a notion coined by Carmen Papalia. (2013a, 2014b, 2021)⁴. As an artist in social practice and a curator himself, Papalia argues when discussing his experience as a nonvisual learner, which is a mode of embodiment that diverges from compulsory able-bodiedness: «I came to realize my way of being in the world as a mode of orientation that has the potential to uncover entire unseen bodies of knowledge.» (Carmen Papalia, 2014a: 359) In this preliminary chapter, I will present Critical Disability Studies (CDS) as a methodological framework through which we can revisit the history of the hierarchical shaping of the senses which has led to Ocularcentrism. By doing so, I will unearth the potential of the intersection of *Crip epistemologies* and artistic practice as a *locus* for education, which will become the generative matrix to dismantle *systemic oppression* by museum spaces as a social epistemic structure that disables⁵ non-normative bodies who do not comply with the ideal and the standard of the visual learner.

Crip theory will be a recurring topic throughout this research since it constitutes one of the most provocative proposals of Critical Disability Studies. Before moving on, it is worth pausing to characterize what will be understood by it. Crip Theory's main proponents have been Carrie Sandahl (2003), Robert McRuer (2006, 2018), and Alison Kafer (2013). Sandahl reclaimed the term 'crip' because she found in it an equivalent

³ I will use Ocularcentrism as a technical term in cultural studies that expresses how Western Culture has been built from a standpoint that privileges images as objects of culture, and visual learners as subjects of culture. I draw on Jay (1994, 1998) and Pallasmaa's (2005) analysis of the primacy of vision. Therefore, this notion is distinct from Merleau-Ponty's ocularcentrism (Brook, 2002). To mark the cultural and political usage of the term, I capitalize it as 'Ocularcentrism' as well as when adjectivized, 'Ocularcentric'. I have opted to avoid the doubling of the 'c' (that Pallasmaa sometimes maintains in 'Occularcentric') for the sake of simplicity.

⁴ See also Bell (2016) for contextualization of Papalia's term within his development of self-advocacy and connections in Disability Justice spaces. More on Papalia is discussed in the fourth chapter.

⁵ The verbal transformation from the noun 'disability' into 'to disable' will be used in frequent occasions throughout the dissertation. This shift enables me to emphasize how being disabled is not an essential and reified way of being in the world, being disabled is rather an *event* that occurs when there is a conjunction of human-built structures and conditions and a bodymind that does not fit in such particular conditions. Therefore, to be disabled by a set of conditions is an accidental, temporary, agreed occurrence. As Papalia puts it concerning museum environments: «Museums disable me as a viewer. Everything, from the artworks to the explanatory texts, assumes a subject who uses their visual sense as a primary way of knowing, and I am a nonvisual learner who requires a different frame of reference. » (Papalia, 2014) This argument can be extended to different social structures such as the medical industrial complex and its drudges: clinics, insurance companies, charity, state disability services, cosmetic medical procedures, bio-colonialism (Mingus, 2015).

functioning to the word ‘queer’, that is, it conveyed an extensive flexibility and fluidity that ‘disabled’ lacked. As she put it: «cripple, like queer, is fluid and ever-changing, claimed by those whom it did not originally define ... The term crip has expanded to include not only those with physical impairments but those with sensory or mental impairments as well.» (Sandahl, 2003: 27). Indeed, Crip Theory borrows from Queer Theory its ongoing fluidity and reconfiguring of identities to develop its inherently non-conformative and non-normative frame (McRuer, 2006: 49). As McRuer argues:

Crip should be permanently and desirably contingent: in other queer, crip, and queercrip contexts, squint-eyed, half dead, not dead yet, gimp, freak, crazy, mad, or diseased pariah have served, or might serve, similar generative functions ... Crip is a critical term [that] in various times and places must be displaced by other terms. (McRuer, 2006: 40-1)

In Crip Theory, ‘crip’ is used both as a noun and as a verb: *cripping* a model or a theory means to reveal, recognize, and challenge its respective calls for normativization. This is translated into «the complex and contradictory life of *resistance* in contemporary queer and crip theory» (McRuer, 2018: 51) which, very much like Foucault’s idea of resistance,⁶ introduces an element of pleasure in McRuer’s inquiry: «What might it mean to welcome the disability to come, to desire it? What might it mean to shape worlds capable of welcoming the disability to come?» (McRuer, 2006: 207) In *Feminist Queer Crip*, Kafer defines the distinctive character of Crip Theory as follows:

disability studies and crip theory differ in orientation and aim: crip theory is more contestatory than disability studies, more willing to explore the potential risks and exclusions of identity politics while simultaneously and “perhaps paradoxically” recognizing the generative role identity has played in the disability rights movement. I see *Feminist, Queer, Crip* as engaging in exactly this kind of contradictory crip theory, and I use both “crip” and “crip theory” as a way to stake my claim alongside the activists and cultural workers engaged in these multiple sites of radical politics. (Kafer, 2013: 15)

⁶ I refer here to the Foucault of the lectures at the Collège de France, especially the lessons on “The Subject and Power” (Foucault, 1982) and “The Hermeneutic of the Subject” (Foucault, 1997), where resistance is understood as an oscillatory force that enables the subject to reinterpret and reconfigure herself without losing the grip of the social structure that ‘subjects’ her, instead of as a purely negative force that opposes power. We find a contemporary reading that connects this idea to the social structures of disability in Shelley Tremain’s work (Tremain, 2008, 2017). In *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, she states: «Power meets resistance. Processes of subjectivation are <elds of struggle, self against self, self against others, and others against self» (Tremain, 2008: 238).

1. How did CDS emerge? A brief history of Disability Studies and CDS

In the academic year 2021-22, at the Faculty of Arts and Science of the University of Toronto, students of Humanities and Social Sciences can undertake the course CSE241Y1: *Introduction to Critical Disability Studies*. The module is found along with the following description:

[The course] draws on an intersectional history and politics of normativity and bodily difference to understand disability as a diverse and materially salient social category that can be used as a lens to better understand systems and experiences of colonization, race, class, gender, age, etc. Explores scenes of disability or 'crip' solidarity, resistance and cultural production, disability D/deaf, and mad arts, coalitional movements for disability justice, collective approaches to access, and other non-normative ways of knowing and being. (University of Toronto, 2021)

From the course description, it is clear that CDS is concerned with intersectionality in its methodology, investigates normativity and bodily difference, and finally, it has an emancipatory objective directed towards resistance and disability justice. But the question remains: what are Critical Disabilities Studies? Critical Disability Studies (CDS) is a field of study that views disability not as much as an object study, but rather as a 'lens' through which we can perform research.

To understand the rise of CDS, it is crucial to review the brief history of its precedent, Disability Studies (DS), as an academic discipline. Although the fact of disability has always been present in humanities and in the arts (Mitchell and Snyder, 2001) as a necessary counterpart for establishing *normalcy*,⁷ a solid base for disability as a philosophical subject via theories and models of disability is relatively new (Davis, 2002). Disability Histories date back to Medieval theories of monstrosity,⁸ but do not

⁷ The notion of 'normalcy' is here understood as the establishment of an ideal that is counterposed to those instances which fail to comply with or fit in the *Normate*, thus reinforcing a conception of difference as a lack. For an accessible definition of the Normate, see Reynolds (2019). For a more exhaustive historical overview of Normates, see Hamraie (2017). Although this idea of normalcy will be revisited throughout the dissertation, it is important to remark here that our standpoint is intrinsically non-normative, in the sense that 'normalcy' will remain suspended in favor of a *crip* standpoint that rejects either/or dichotomies that separate the normal from the *misfit* (Garland-Thomson, 2019).

⁸ Even during the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century, people with disabilities lived in perpetual poverty because they could not access the workforce (Thévenin, 2006: 283-8). Most of them were institutionalized, either in *poorhouses* in England – institutions for paupers maintained by public funds – or charity institutions in France, which kept people who were disabled and poor apart from society. With the outbreak of World War II, which caused a flood of disabled veterans around Europe, the maintenance of the merging of poverty and disability was no longer sustainable. This event challenged the confluence

begin to be recorded as such until nineteenth-century Imperialism, when disability and race become entangled concepts (Kennedy, 2016, 2020; Kennedy and Newton, 2016).



Fig.1 *Jambe et pied de chinoise*: anthropologic record of two photos pasted on a cardboard, depicting the bones of a leg and foot of a Chinese person, in pencil some measurements are noted. The toes are curled up downwards. The images were taken between 1860 and 1869 and are currently in the archive of the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac in Paris. Credit : Potteau Philippe Jacques. Photo credit : musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, [RMN-Grand Palais](#).

Since it is far beyond the scope of this thesis to trace back disability histories, I will refer to Dr. Jaipreet Virdi's exemplary reading guide for the Fall 2020 course of University of Delaware *Disability Histories* (Viridi, 2020) and to the canonical compendiums in Disability History of Burch and Rembis (2014), and Williamson and Guffey (2020).⁹ It is worth mentioning the two most used edited comprehensive handbooks of Disability History: *The Routledge History of Disability*, edited by Hanes, Brown and Hansen (2018), which aims to provide a global history of disability; and *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History* by Rembris, Kudlick, and Nielsen (2018), which focuses on the Western and especially North American context. The Oxford volume is very ambitious in terms of time periods – going from Greco-Roman Antiquity to post-World War II contexts – and includes indeed five chapters that examine South Asia, British West Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and China, although these remain marginal compared to the analysis of European and North-American contexts, which constitute the other twenty-two chapters. For a more critical historiography of Disability History in North America, one should refer to Garland-Thomson's already classic

of criminality, pauperism, and disabilities that had justified keeping people with disabilities isolated and in precarious life conditions until then (Cohen, 2001; Gerber, 2012).

⁹ For a more comprehensive Disability History from Antiquity to Modern rehabilitation, see Stiker (1999).

Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature (2017 [1997]) which spans from 1835 until the 1990s. During the 19th century, the Disability Rights Movement was fighting for basic rights like Formal Deaf Education (Crouch and Greenwald, 2007), which began in the US in 1815 with the creation of the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons in Hartford, Connecticut, by Thomas H. Gallaudet (Sonneborn, 2019). In 1932, American society steps forward and elects President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was visibly disabled and had to use a wheelchair due to his paralysis caused by polio. As President, he supported the founding of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (now known as the March of Dimes) (Sonneborn, 2019).

One must reach the last third of the twentieth century to find the constitution of Disability Studies as such, which is towed along by the Disability Rights movement after World War II. This piggybacking on activism will be paralleled by the constitution of Critical Disabilities Studies in the twenty-first century relies on the foundations laid by Disability Justice since 2005, as we will examine later on chapter III. Circling back to the Disability Rights movement, the dramatic arrival of veterans with disabilities promoted the beginning of National Barrier-Free Standards in 1940 to ensure buildings' accessibility for those with mobility disabilities. In 1949, this first step was followed by the creation of the National Mental Health Foundation in the UK, which advocated for *deinstitutionalization*.¹⁰ Nine years later, the right of education seems to be finally granted to people with disabilities thanks to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which enables public schools to teach children with intellectual disabilities. However, it will not be until 1975, with the signing into law of the Education for the Handicapped Children Act¹¹ – later

¹⁰ The Mental Health Foundation appeared in postwar Britain as an attempt to fight the stigma against mental health and balance the funding that was being directed towards physical and mental disabilities. Founder Derek Richter was «particularly interested in how your experiences (such as serving in a war) and the environment you live in can shape your mental health» (Mental Health Foundation, 2019).

¹¹ The Education for the Handicapped Children Act states the problems identified by the Congress: «(1) the special educational needs of handicapped children are not being fully met; (2) one million of the handicapped children in the United States are excluded entirely from the public school system and will not go through the educational process with their peers; and (3) it is in the national interest that the Federal Government assist State and local efforts to provide programs to meet the educational needs of handicapped children in order to assure equal protection of the laws» (H.R.7217 - 94th Congress, 1975-1976). As a corrective, it aims to «insure that all handicapped children have available to them special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs» (H.R.7217 - 94th Congress, 1975-1976)

known as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – that free and public educations is ensured for all children with disabilities.

The problem of barrier-free design re-emerges in 1968 with the Architectural Barriers Act, which aims to improve the design of work buildings and facilities making it more accessible and increasing the opportunities for employment for people with disabilities.¹² Meanwhile, Disability Rights activists become more organized, mainly in the West Coast of California. In the sixties, Ed Roberts and Judy Heumann¹³ create the Independent Living Movement and establish the first Center for Independent Living (CIL, 1962), which advocates for the agency and freedom of choice of people with disabilities. The advance of the Disability Rights Movement and Disability Studies in the United States was being mirrored simultaneously in the United Kingdom. In 1972, the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) was founded in the UK as a political instrument to vindicate civil rights for people with disabilities and also developed what is known as *the British social model of disability* (Rice, 2018).

As Cecilia Capuzzi Simon explains in «Disability Studies: A new normal» (2013) published in *The New York Times*, the expansion of DS as a discipline is culturally located in the United States and is closely connected to the 1990's approval of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). While the slogan “Nothing About Us Without Us” echoes from the East Coast disability-led organization Disabled in Action in Pennsylvania, in 1977 Judy Heumann leads a group of demonstrators to the Occupation of the Federal office of Health, Education, and Welfare in San Francisco. Demonstrators protest the failure of Secretary Califano's to comply with Section 504 of 1973 Rehabilitation Act

making it illegal for federal agencies, public universities, and other public institutions receiving any federal funds to discriminate on the basis of disability. After 25 days,

¹² The Architectural Barriers Act, usually referred to as the ABA, was a bill passed by the Congress on August 12, 1968. It aims to «insure that certain buildings financed with Federal funds are so designed and constructed as to be accessible to the physically handicapped» (S.222 - 90th Congress, 1967-1968).

¹³ Judy passed away on March 4, 2023, when the last chapter of this dissertation was being written. It was an enormous loss for the whole Disability Rights and Disability Justice community, but people responded with a celebration of her joy instead of with a dark cloud of grief. I was lucky enough to be in contact with Judy during the summer of 2021, shortly after the release of the documentary *Crip Camp*, through brief interactions on Instagram to promote the film and her new podcast *The Heumann Perspective*. Her determination in the struggle for Disability Rights is still present in every inch we advance in the dismantling of oppressive ableist systems.

Secretary Califano relents and signs the regulations into effect. The take-over event is the longest occupation of a federal office by protestors in U.S. history. (Sonneborn, 2019)



Fig. 2 Two people sleep under a blanket at the foot of a marble staircase. Their shoes are nearby and on the left there is an empty wheelchair. The photo was taken during the 504 sit-in in San Francisco, 1977. Photo credit: HolLynn D'Lil, [New York Times](#).

The impetus of the occupation skyrockets the Disability Rights Movement onto the Capital Crawl Protest on March 12, 1990, which was crucial for the signing into law of the ADA, on July 26, that same year by the 101st Congress. The ADA National Network defines the ADA as

a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. The ADA gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. The ADA is divided into five titles (or sections) that relate to different areas of public life. (ADA National Network, 2022)

The ADA is the most impactful legislation in US Public Law concerning people with disabilities, addressing the Congress's findings that «some 43,000,000 Americans have one or more physical or mental disabilities, and this number is increasing as the

population as a whole is growing older» (S.933 - 101st Congress, 1989-1990), and these Americans continued experiencing discrimination in crucial areas of their daily life. However,

unlike individuals who have experienced discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, or age, individuals who have experienced discrimination on the basis of disability have often no legal recourse to redress such discrimination. (S.933 - 101st Congress,1989-1990: Sec.2)

With the purpose to provide such legal resources for American citizens with disabilities, the ADA established six titles that aim «to a clear and comprehensive prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability» (S.933 - 101st Congress,1989-1990). The five titles are (I) Employment, (II) State and Local Government, (III) Public Accommodations, (IV) Telecommunications, and (V) Miscellaneous Provisions. Despite its shortcomings, the approval of the ADA as a law in 1990 marked a milestone in Disability Rights in the US and became an example of good legal practice concerning disabilities around the globe. Since then, however, further Best Practice protocols and strategies have been developed and defended by the second-wave Disability Rights movement, which will be synthesized in the section on Disability Justice.

2. Before and after the ADA, 1990

Should we then locate the birth of Disability Studies close to the nineties? The history of the Disability Rights Movement suggests so, if we take into account that before the ADA legislation signed by President George H.W. Bush, people with disabilities lacked civil rights protections and were discriminated in public life, this including their participation in academic life and universities' interest in disability beyond a clinical point of view. It is worth picturing the significance of the Capital Crawl Protest: the action gathered over a thousand of protesters, among which over 60 activists who got off their wheelchairs or mobility devices and began a slow and effortful crawl up the 83 steps that enabled them to reach the U.S. Capitol Building under the cries of “I want my civil rights” and “I want to be treated like a human being” (Sonneborn, 2019).



Fig. 3 Protesters Tom Malone (Kentucky) and Shaila Jackson (Georgia) crawl up the Capitol stairs in Washington D.C. on March 12, 1990. Credit: [Tom Olin Collection](#).

The main precedent of the ADA was the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons*, which dates back to December 9, 1975, and constitutes a framework to shape international and domestic law. The Declaration consists of a preamble and thirteen rights, as follows:

1. The term "disabled person" means any person unable to ensure by himself or herself, wholly or partly, the necessities of a normal individual and/or social life, as a result of deficiency, either congenital or not, in his or her physical or mental capabilities.
2. Disabled persons shall enjoy all the rights set forth in this Declaration. These rights shall be granted to all disabled persons without any exception whatsoever and without distinction or discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, state of wealth, birth or any other situation applying either to the disabled person himself or herself or to his or her family.
3. Disabled persons have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. Disabled persons, whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and full as possible.
4. Disabled persons have the same civil and political rights as other human beings; paragraph 7 of the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons applies to any possible limitation or suppression of those rights for mentally disabled persons.
5. Disabled persons are entitled to the measures designed to enable them to become as self-reliant as possible.
6. Disabled persons have the right to medical, psychological and functional treatment, including prosthetic and orthotic appliances, to medical and social rehabilitation,

education, vocational training and rehabilitation, aid, counselling, placement services and other services which will enable them to develop their capabilities and skills to the maximum and will hasten the processes of their social integration or reintegration.

7. Disabled persons have the right to economic and social security and to a decent level of living. They have the right, according to their capabilities, to secure and retain employment or to engage in a useful, productive and remunerative occupation and to join trade unions.

8. Disabled persons are entitled to have their special needs taken into consideration at all stages of economic and social planning.

9. Disabled persons have the right to live with their families or with foster parents and to participate in all social, creative or recreational activities. No disabled person shall be subjected, as far as his or her residence is concerned, to differential treatment other than that required by his or her condition or by the improvement which he or she may derive therefrom. If the stay of a disabled person in a specialized establishment is indispensable, the environment and living conditions therein shall be as close as possible to those of the normal life of a person of his or her age.

10. Disabled persons shall be protected against all exploitation, all regulations and all treatment of a discriminatory, abusive or degrading nature.

11. Disabled persons shall be able to avail themselves of qualified legal aid when such aid proves indispensable for the protection of their persons and property. If judicial proceedings are instituted against them, the legal procedure applied shall take their physical and mental condition fully into account.

12. Organizations of disabled persons may be usefully consulted in all matters regarding the rights of disabled persons.

13. Disabled persons, their families and communities shall be fully informed, by all appropriate means, of the rights contained in this Declaration. (UN Human Rights Office, 1975)

That same year, Disability Rights activists, collectivized in the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation and the Disability Alliance protested against the preeminence of the *medical model*¹⁴ and the clinical interest in the fact of disability, and put forward a *social model* that rejects the medical definition of disability, embracing instead that it is social contexts that disable individuals with bodily variance (Goodley, 2012; Shakespeare, 1997).

However, it took eleven more years for Disability Studies to be constituted as a legitimate field of study within humanities. In 1982, the Section for the Study of Chronic Illness, Impairment, and Disability was founded in the United States. In 1986, it changed its name to the Society for Disability Studies (SDS), which is still active nowadays. Its

¹⁴ Until the emergence of Disability Studies, the medical model had not been defined conceptually, but rather had been implicitly working in the rehabilitation framework of clinical institutions. It is only when confronted with the social model that an explicit definition of the medical model emerges. Siebers identifies this emergence as a move from understanding disability as deficiency into conceiving «disability as the effect of an environment hostile to some bodies and not to others, requiring advances in social justice rather than medicine» (Siebers, 2006: 173).

open-access academic journal, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, was the first periodical publication in disability studies. The SDS defines it as: «International in scope, Disability Studies Quarterly provides scholars, activists, artists with disabilities, and others to consider the experience of disability in the written form» (Society for Disability Studies, 2021).

The role of SDS in the constitution of disability studies as an academic discipline has been fundamental. In the United States, Syracuse University designed the first Disability Studies program in 1994, and programs have proliferated globally ever since (Capuzzi Simon, 2013). As it became slowly established in university programs, the first handbooks and companions were also published in the late nineties. After the first edition of *Disability Studies Reader* by Lennard J. Davis (1997), it is worth mentioning the principal literature during its first period. The *Handbook of Disability Studies* edited Albrecht, Seelman and Bury (2001) is a comprehensive volume that collects essays from the beginnings of theorizing disability and the emergence of the social model. During the first decade of the 2000s, the social model began to be questioned and critical approaches were developed (Goodley, 2012; Mallett and Runswick-Cole, 2014; Snyder, Brueggemann and Garland-Thomson, 2002). Consequently, the first edition of the *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies*, edited by Watson and Vehmas in 2012, already represented a shift from the social model to multidisciplinary and critical disability studies, which was even more marked in its second edition published in 2020.

How can we define Disability Studies as an academic discipline? Early definitions like Linton's incorporate the relation to the Disability Rights Movement, highlighting specifically Disability Studies' tight ties to the social model:

Disability Studies reframes the study of disability by focusing on it as a social phenomenon, social construct, metaphor, and culture utilizing a minority group model. It examines ideas related to disability in all forms of cultural representations throughout history, and examines the policies and practices of all societies to understand the social, rather than the physical or psychological, determinants of the experience of disability. Disability Studies both emanates from and supports the Disability Rights Movement, which advocates for civil rights and self-determination. This focus shifts the emphasis from a prevention/treatment/remediation paradigm, to a social/cultural/ political paradigm. This shift does not signify a denial of the presence of impairments, nor a rejection of the utility of intervention and treatment. Instead, Disability Studies has been developed to disentangle impairments from the myth, ideology, and stigma that influence social interaction and social policy. The

scholarship challenges the idea that the economic and social statuses and the assigned roles of people with disabilities are inevitable outcomes of their condition. (Linton, 1998: 8)

A more recent definition by the Society for Disability Studies (2015) defines it as a curriculum that engages with the fact of disability using an interdisciplinary approach. Disability Studies would have three objectives. First, to challenge the stigmatizing medical model of disability through a social approach, examining «the social, political, cultural, and economic factors that define disability» (Society for Disability Studies, 2015). As its statement claimed: «While acknowledging that medical research and intervention can be useful, Disability Studies should interrogate the connections between medical practice and stigmatizing disability» (Society for Disability Studies, 2015). Secondly, Disability Studies aimed at a context-specific and local analysis of the fact of disability, «studying national and international perspectives, policies, literature, culture, and history» (Society for Disability Studies, 2015). And finally, Disability Studies prioritized disabled-led initiatives while accepting contributions from both researchers with and without disabilities. Despite introducing the multidisciplinary stance, this definition show how Disability Studies has remained within the borders of social sciences and has not lost its dependency on the social model of disability.

While CDS is not defined by its object of study, traditional Disability Studies (DS) has focused on *the fact of disability* as subject-matter using a variety of methodologies and approaches of different conventional knowledge systems, among them: literary analysis, justice theories, performance studies, art theory, and sociological approaches. (Rice, 2018) An example of this borrowing from the social sciences and humanities is Michael Oliver's book *Politics of Disablement: A Sociological Approach* (1990), in which he confronts the medical view of disabilities with the social issues surrounding it. The main idea, and the characteristic that distinguishes Disability Studies from Critical Disability Studies, is that Disability Studies does not have, and has never aimed to have *its own methodology*.

For example, DS has used the methodologies of medicine and structuralism to develop the medical model and the social model of disability, respectively; this is problematic because these are the same methodologies used to build the oppressive systems that *disable* individuals. In a more concrete example, Disability Studies has

resorted to the methodologies of historiography to study the history of the blind. In contrast, the object study of CDS is not always disability but is always studied *from* disability. This means that CDS builds its heuristics and methodology which consists of approaching an object, event, or structure from how it is shaped by social and medical notions of what constitutes the fact of disability. CDS scrutinizes, as Julie Avril Minich puts it, «not bodily or mental impairments but the social norms that define particular attributes as impairments, as well as the social conditions that concentrate stigmatized attributes in particular populations» (Minich, 2016).

3. Establishing a new discipline: CDS and Critical Theory

CDS as a methodology is not a subject-based field (Minich, 2016, 2017; Kim, 2017; Schalk, 2017). It is characterized by its link to Critical Social Theory as a nuanced methodology for examining and understanding contemporary social and political relations, developed firstly in the Frankfurt School especially from the 1930s and the 1950s generations, which flew to America and established a diaspora in the States during the dawn of World War II (Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009: 49). However, it is worth emphasizing that this link is not *historical*, but merely *methodological*. None of the members of the Frankfurt School took part in the Disability Rights Movements or in the emergence of Critical Disability Studies. CDS began to denominate itself Critical during the first decade of the 2000s referring to the broader sense of a methodology in political inquiry that has emancipatory aims. As Horkheimer put it, ‘critical’ theory could be distinguished from ‘traditional’ theory because Critical Theory sought «emancipation from slavery», had a liberating and transformative focus, and worked «to create a world which satisfies [human] needs and powers» (Horkheimer, 1972: 246).

Like Critical Theory, CDS examines the fact of disability in a fine-grained way, rejecting to dichotomize disability. Furthermore, CDS engages with intersectional approaches to provide such fine-grained analysis with a standpoint that considers multiple axes of oppression beyond the class-centered approach of Critical Theory. That is, CDS considers the multiple systems of oppression that operate in configuring disability, from an intersectional standpoint that avoids both a single-issued understanding of disability and «the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought»

(Collins, 1991: 225). CDS's critical character links it to Critical Theory in the sense that it «links theory with praxis in the struggle for an autonomous and participatory society ... is self-aware of its historicity» and «engages in dialogue among cultures» (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009: 54). CDS has also employed Critical Theory's link to praxis and its interdisciplinarity as a corrective to the one-dimensionality of the social model. For instance, in *Critical Theory and Disability: A Phenomenological Approach*, Teodor Mladenov (2016) uses Critical Theory's methodology to challenge the shortcomings of the British social model of disability. The link between Critical Theory and CDS can also be located in their *transformative politics*, a claim that is shared in this thesis and that will be developed when connecting CDS and Disability Justice in what follows. In conclusion, being defined by its methodology rather than the subject study, CDS distances itself from traditional social studies because it involves an intersectional approach and a social dimension that goes beyond the individual.

A mapping of the last texts on CDS allows identifying the following hot spots of the research, which have been confirmed in discussion with the most relevant figures in the field through my participation in projects like Berkeley RadMad Disability Lab *Pain Pals* (currently funded by Creative BC, 2023), UAL's research project *Beyond the Visual* (McPeake & Wilder, 2021) and Vancouver-based Open Access Foundation for the Arts and Culture (OAFAC, 2022), and through conversations with d'Evie and Kleege (2018) and Carmen Papalia (2018) among others, since 2020.

These topics of research can be arranged in the following distinguishable lines. First, CDS scholars are conducting examinations of how dynamics of power/ knowledge are currently *disabling* individuals in social and medical environments. These studies stem from the tradition of Foucault's theory of governance of bodies (Foucault, 1969) and are updated to account for contemporary systems of power and control.¹⁵ However, in *The Birth of the Clinic* Foucault already notes, although not using this term, the Ocularcentric standpoint of European knowledge:

So many powers, from the slow illumination of obscurities, the ever-prudent reading of the essential, the calculation of times and risks, to the mastery of the heart and the

¹⁵ In the disciplinary society as analyzed by Foucault, it is worth noting that the paradigm of control is also Ocularcentric, that is, Bentham's *Panopticon* (Foucault, 1975).

majestic confiscation of paternal authority, are just so many forms in which the sovereignty of the gaze gradually establishes itself—the eye that knows and decides, the eye that governs. The clinic was probably the first attempt to order a science on the exercise and decisions of the gaze. From the second half of the seventeenth century, natural history had set out to analyze and classify natural beings according to their visible characters ... The clinic demands as much of the gaze as natural history. As much, and to a certain extent, the same thing: to see, to isolate features, to recognize those that are identical and those that are different, to regroup them, to classify them by species or families. The naturalist model, to which medicine had partly been subjected in the eighteenth century, remained active. (Foucault, 2003 [1963]: 88-89)

This lineage is evident in Shelley Tremain's *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (2008). Kevin Aho and Havi Carel have studied in detail the role of ableism in the construction of health and illness (Aho, 2018; Carel 2016, 2018). Dan Goodley (2012) has introduced the interdisciplinary approach of these disabling systems, thus opening up the possibility of other approaches to analyze the politics of disability, such as Aimi Hamraie's (2017) architectural approach and the right of death in these built ableist environments (Ware, Holland & Lemmens, 2021). On another note, following Goodley's framework Carlson (2001) and Gillies (2014) opt for a feminist approach. In his interdisciplinary approach, Goodley uses the form 'Dis/ability' to designate the bodymind, a term defined by Margaret Price as «the imbrication (not just the combination) of the entities usually called 'body' and 'mind'.» (Price, 2015: 270) Garland-Thomson uses instead ability/disability (Garland-Thomson, 2009) and Sami Schalk (2017, 2018) proposes the use of (dis)ability because the parenthetical designation:

gestures toward the mutually dependent nature of disability and ability. ... That is, the marginalized space of disability exists around, and helps define the limits of, the centered, privileged space of ability. Further, for me, the curve of the parenthesis, rather than the backslash of dis/ability or disability/ability, also visually suggests the mutable nature of these terms. (Schalk, 2017)¹⁶

¹⁶ As a rule, I will respect each author and artist's choice regarding how to designate the condition of being disabled. The debate between identity-first and person-first language is problematized even further by the alternatives mentioned above – dis/ability, ability/disability, (dis)ability – which continue to proliferate. In Crip Theory and in artistic collectives like Sins Invalid, the term 'crip' is preferred. However, I agree here with Tasia Aránguez Sánchez's (2022) arguments about how 'crip' dissolves the political and legal identity of Disabled people. Therefore, when it is my own voice speaking, I will adopt the identity first and capitalized form of "Disabled person". This choice is not without conflict, but after discussing it in various Disability Justice spaces, I argue that it is the best option to emphasize how being disabled is a result of the systemic oppression and sociopolitical structure that is disabling you as a bodymind. The capitalization serves me to mark it as a *political* identity and as a technical term in this particular dissertation.

Apart from her contributions to CDS vocabulary, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has been one of the pioneering figures of the second line of research of the field: feminism, queerness, and the gendered world of disability. These studies arise out of CDS's interest in intersecting matrices of domination and its will to avoid taking disability as an isolated medical or social issue. After the pioneering work of Susan Wendell (1996), Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1996, 2002, 2009), Eli Clare and Aurora Levins Morales (Clare, Morales & Spade, 1999) of integrating Feminist Theory into reflections on disability, and vice versa, feminist and queer approaches to disability and dependency have proliferated mainly from Queer Crip theory (Hall 2011, 2014; Clare 2001; Kafer, 2013) and structuralist and environmentalist perspectives (Hamraie, 2016; Kittay and Feder, 2002; Mollow, 2013).

The third hot spot of CDS can be situated within this interest in intersectionality when examining disabling structures. In this case, the intersecting systems that oppression in virtue of race and disability. This territory is known as Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit). DisCrit is a field of research that emerges out of the analysis of how specific and intense kinds of violence emerge for racialized people with disabilities. Developed by Annamma, Connor, and Ferri (2013, 2016, 2018), DisCrit examines the violence undergone by subjects like women of color and undocumented migrants (Annamma, 2013) mainly in two systems: Education and Imprisonment. These two are connected by what is denominated "the school to prison pipeline" (Annamma, 2014a, 2014b), which is aggravated for racialized students with disabilities. Ben-Moshe Liat and Allison C. Carey have explored the connections between disability, race, and incarceration in North America at length and how to introduce this problem in higher education curricula (Ben-Moshe, Chapman, Carey, 2014; Ben-Moshe, Cory, Feldbaum, Sagendorf, 2005). On another level, the entanglement of violence, race theory, and disability studies focusing on its consequences in schools has been developed by Nirmala Erevelles (Erevelles and Watts, 2004; Erevelles and Minear, 2010). Finally, DisCrit has also opened up reflections on identity and the experience of disability as a racialized person, examples of which are Schalk's research on Black Women Speculative Fiction (Schalk, 2018), Ellen Jean Samuels's *Fantasies of Identification* (2014), and Lydia X. Z. Brown, Ashkenazi and Onaiwu's anthology *All the Weight of Our Dreams: On Living Radicalized Autism* (2017).

A fourth topic that has been explored by CDS is the specific oppression suffered by people with chronic illnesses, chronic pain, partial impairments and nonvisible disabilities – which were highly dismissed by traditional Disability Studies. These liminal conditions have phenomenological and social consequences, such as education and work inequalities, or lack of recognition of complex disability identities (Samuels, 2003, 2014). Although invisible disabilities were marginally present in DS (Davis, 2004), CDS has generated a focus on people with non-apparent disabilities and chronic illness or injuries, such as: Type 1 Diabetes, autism and Asperger spectrum, sensory processing difficulties, mental health conditions, chronic pain and fatigue, rare diseases, and Ehler-Danlos syndrome.¹⁷ It is worth noting that people with Ehler-Danlos syndrome have adopted the identity of *Zebbras* (The Ehlers-Danlos Society, 2022), emphasizing the difficulties to diagnose and treat a syndrome that has “different stripes” in each individual. Zebra Pride has embraced slogans like “I am a proud Zebra Warrior” or “I’m so rare I’m practically mythical”. This pride has engendered a solidarity network among people with non-visible disabilities and rare diseases who usually suffer from a lack of recognition and are targets of ableist remarks for “not looking sick enough”, examined in detail by Kattari, Olzman and Hanna (2018). After the first publications dedicated to this topic, mainly Aho and Aho’s book *Body matters: A phenomenology of sickness, disease, and illness* (2008), non-visible disabilities, illnesses and chronic pain have gained notability since the emergence of CDS, with papers from the last decade such as Vidali (2010) on gastrointestinal disorders, Ghiaciuc (2011) on Multiple Sclerosis and Fibromyalgia, Crosby (2016) on neurological pain, and Sheppard (2019) and Bailey (2019) on chronic pain and depression, among others. These studies are concerned with broadening the scope of disability identity and its legibility, as Evans remarks

Decisions to un/cover (after a disability disclosure has already been made) play a pivotal role for this group in developing a strong, positive disability identity and making that identity legible to others. Decisions to pass, cover, or un/cover are ongoing decisions that stitch together the fabric of each person's daily life experiences, thus serving as primary mechanisms for identity negotiation and management. (Evans, 2017)

¹⁷ Ehler-Danlos syndrome is an umbrella medical term that embraces thirteen (individualized so far) connective tissue disorders that lead to joint hypermobility, skin hyperextensibility, and different kinds of tissue fragility that make bodies more vulnerable to be damaged and more difficult to be healed (The Ehler-Danlos Society, 2022).

A different line that connects with the problem of legibility and representation, but which distances itself from Foucauldian issues and intersections of matrices of powers, is the problem of (mis)representations of disability in fiction. The problem of representation has been central in Disability Studies since its beginnings and goes back to the disability rights movement, as it is manifested by the slogan *Nothing About Us Without Us*, which stems from James I. Charlton's essay with the same title (Charlton, 2000). Charlton notes that the lack of self-representation of people with disabilities is at the core of a mechanism of oppression and argues that «self-representation and control over resources needed to live a decent life» (Charlton, 2000: 16) are essential to building the politics and organization of empowerment against disability oppression in everyday life. Some scholars have analyzed how this lack of self-representation has shaped our narratives in literary theory (Wiener, Ribeiro and Warner, 2009; Mitchell and Snyder, 2001) and our imagery in visual culture.¹⁸

As a sixth and last area of research, an increasing volume of literature is being produced on Disability Aesthetics within CDS. In line with the problem of misrepresentation in the arts, Tobin Siebers proposes a bold theory in *Disability Aesthetics* (2010), arguing instead that visual culture and artistic canons were built upon the fascination for disability and that has been functioning due to an extended ableist fear of abjection. Siebers work leads us to the last line of research in CDS: *museum curatorship and aesthetic practices*. Throughout this thesis, I will argue that this hot spot is the locus for transformative justice within CDS. Researchers, artists and activist exploring ways to alter the institutionalized structures of oppression that disable non-normative bodies in museum and gallery spaces, and within artistic practices are pushing forward the limits of what we understand as Disability Justice, Access and Inclusion. Through curatorial practices, art writing, and art-making, CDS is revisiting and transforming canonical art history, and acting as a counterpart to how, as Carmen Papalia puts it, «museums disable me [and any nonvisual learner] as a viewer » (Papalia 2014b). It is worth emphasizing the work in curatorship of Amanda Cachia “cripping the museum” in her own writing

¹⁸ Millet-Gallant (2010) analyses the complex relationship between disability and contemporary art; while Quayson (2007) goes one step further and states that there is a connection between representations of disability and the crisis of representation in Samuel Beckett, Toni Morrison, Wole Soyinka, and J. M. Coetzee.

(Cachia, 2013, 2014, 2017a, 2019a, 2019b, 2020) and edited volumes (Cachia, 2023) over more than ten years of activity now. Concerning artists/curators/scholars one must refer to the works and curatorship of Aaron McPeake (2017), as well as the non-visual approaches to museum collections and contemporary creators developed by Georgina Kleege on her own (Kleege, 2018), and in collaboration with artist and researcher Fayen D'Evie. A sub-branch of this field has focused on the spatial dimension of curatorship and museums and galleries, which has been compiled by architect Jos Boys in *Disability, Space, Architecture: A Reader* (2017).

Finally, I want to highlight the transformative work towards Open Access performed by Carmen Papalia's writing, curatorship and social practice, and Matthew Rader's creative writing (2019). However, this embodied knowledge of curators and practitioners is still lacking a solid philosophical ground and a theory of aesthetics that accounts for the transformative strategies and of un-erasure in canonical art history that disabled community groups and individuals with disabilities are performing to reclaim a space that has been used to misrepresent them. It is therefore the aim of this dissertation to contribute to this line of research by providing a conceptual framework for these already ongoing practices, an effort already began by the abovementioned practitioners. The first step towards this theorization in the last decade can be found in the outputs of Simon Hayhoe on philosophy and access (2013, 2015). However, I argue that the numerous contributions proliferating in a new philosophy of access have focused on the experiences of blindness, as it is palpable in the special issues by *Disability Studies Quarterly* dedicated to aesthetics and museum studies: «Museum experience and blindness» (Levent, Kleege & Pursley, 2013) and «Blindness Arts» (Thompson and Warne, 2018). The difficulty of this quest is trying to make sense of somatic and spatial practices and expressing them in a discursive form. As Matthew Rader adverted me, in conversations on this dissertation: «you are seeking the poet's task, you are trying to name the unnamable». After working closely with CDS artists and scholars, I think this field of research is very promising if it is to work in tandem with traditional and contemporary Philosophical fields, in concrete Pragmatism, Phenomenology, and Care Ethics. The connection between the embodied experiences in curatorship and aesthetic experiences that direct us to a salient awareness of different senses and these traditions will be outlined in the roadmap of this dissertation below.

In the last decade, CDS has been introduced into academic discourses and formal higher education institutions, such as the UC Berkeley Disability Lab or the CDS Collective at the University of Minnesota in the United States, and the Graduate Program in CDS at York University in Canada. Specialized academic journals on CDS have been established: *Disability Studies Quarterly* of the Society of Disability Studies – which has broadened its scope beyond DS to include CDS; *the Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*; *Critical Disability Discourses* from York University; *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*; *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*; and the most recent, *The Journal of Philosophy of Disability*. In parallel, CDS spaces of divulgation and community-based activities have emerged, such as Contra* Podcasts (Critical Design Lab, 2020); San Francisco-based collective Sins Invalid (2019), Tangled Art + Disability (2023); VocalEye Canada (2023), the Gachet Gallery and Carmen Papalia’s OAFAC (2022) in Vancouver. In England, the solidly established Shape Arts (2022) – founded in 1976 – has been joined by projects like VocalEyes (2016), The DisOrdinary Architecture Project (2021); or CRIptic Disability Arts Hub (CRIptic Arts, 2023), funded by the Arts Council of England. Finally, I may add the most recent AHRC Network UAL’s interdisciplinary research project *Beyond the Visual: Non-sighted Modes of Engaging Art*, led by Dr. Ken Wilson (PI) and Dr. Aaron McPeake (McPeake & Wilder, 2021), of which I have the pleasure to be part alongside artists and collaborators Georgina Kleege, Carmen Papalia and Fayen D’Evie.

4. What is Disability Justice?

Disability Justice is a term coined in 2005 in conversations between queer disabled women of color Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, and Stacey Milbern; and joined later by Leroy Moore, Eli Clare and Sebastian Margaret. These dialogues emerged in the setting of Sins Invalid, a Disability Justice project on performative arts centered on the sexuality and pleasures of LGBTQ+ and BIPOC Disabled creators and performers.¹⁹ First and

¹⁹ Sins Invalid continues to be a leading force in Disability Justice, not only through its performances mainly around the San Francisco Bay Area, but also with the rich resources it publishes, which range from Black Disability Justice Syllabus (Sins Invalid, 2023) to multiple manifestos of cross-movement solidarity and videos of conversations around central topics in Disability Justice such as Reproductive Justice or Fat Liberation. Sins Invalid has also published the Disability Justice primer *Skin, Tooth and Bone* (Sins Invalid, 2019) which will be used as the main source for the analysis of DJ principles in this dissertation. Therefore, Sins Invalid has become a gathering space not only for Disabled artists, but also for many activists and scholars who are key figures in advancing DJ. Throughout this dissertation, I assume the acronyms used by

foremost, Disability Justice aimed to shift and broaden the focus of Disability Rights and independent living, towards a movement that took into account the multiplicity of oppression instead of invisibilizing

the lives of disabled people of color, immigrants with disabilities, disabled people who practice marginalized religions, ... queers with disabilities, trans and gender non-conforming people with disabilities, people with disabilities who are houseless, people with disabilities who are incarcerated, people with disabilities who have had their ancestral lands stolen, amongst others. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 15)

The movement constituted a response to the shortcomings of Disability Rights, which still focused on disability as a simple identity in front of intersectional approaches, was centered on white experiences and privileged mobility impairments and visible invisibilities at the expense of non-visible disabilities. The movement was established in Patty Berne's landmark essay «Disability Justice - a working draft by Patty Berne» (2015), where she defines it as follows:

A Disability Justice framework understands that all bodies are unique and essential, that all bodies have strengths and needs that must be met. We know that we are powerful not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them. We understand that all bodies are caught in these bindings of ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state and imperialism, and that we cannot separate them. These are the positions from where we struggle. We are in a global system that is incompatible with life. There is no way stop a single gear in motion — we must dismantle this machine. (Berne, 2015)

The basis of the movement is further developed in *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People. A Disability Justice Primer* by Sins Invalid, published first in 2016 and re-edited and revised in 2019 to incorporate more organizational strategies based on consulting with Disability Justice collectives (Kafai & Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha: 2022). Disability Justice provides a practical prospect of emancipation, strategies of resistance and resilience, and social change for Critical Disability Studies. Therefore, we can establish a fertile reciprocal relationship between Disability Justice activists and artists, and CDS scholars. Although the Disability Justice movement has been the leading force breaking the ground for CDS chronologically, ever since both fields have co-existed, research and activism have been in constant dialogue, and individuals involved and committed with Disability Justice have moved back and

Sins Invalid to identify their intersections with race and gender: LGBTQ+ to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and more; and BIPOC, standing for Black Indigenous People of Color.

forth between theory and praxis, making the distinction between CDS and Disability Justice activism fuzzier and fuzzier. A paradigmatic example of this is Alice Wong's project *Disability Visibility*, which has been running since 2016 and has resulted in *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* (Wong, 2020). *Disability Visibility* is a project that aims to record oral and written experiences of people with disabilities, and at its core considers that this recollection and publishing of essays, reports, poetry and blogpost from the perspective of people with disabilities enables the making of an online community that is itself an instantiation of Disability Justice activism.²⁰

Disability Justice as a framework also provides ten working principles that can be used as a best practice guide not only in activism but also in CDS scholarship. The ten principles are:

1. *Intersectionality*: the first principle is methodological and refers to Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) concept. While Disability Rights treated disability as a single-issue identity, Disability Justice acknowledges the complexity of networks of oppression and privilege where we are embedded. Intersectionality is the principle that «shapes the perspectives we offer» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 23).
2. *Leadership of those most impacted*: Against the expertise and leadership of academics, Disability Justice foregrounds the first-person experiences of those who are most impacted. Although theory can be a means to formalizing some experiences, by centering around the most impacted and privileging disability-led actions, «we keep ourselves grounded in real-world problems and find creative strategies for resistance» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 23)
3. *Anti-capitalistic politics*: Introducing class struggle in the matrices of domination that can intersect with disability identities, Disability Justice aligns with anti-capitalistic movements. It critiques its ideology of competition and connects the

²⁰ Following the publication of *Disability Visibility* in 2020, Alice Wong has just published her memoir, *Year of the Tiger: An Activist's Life* (2022b). The memoir was released in September 2022, right after Wong had spent the whole summer at ICU, experiencing medical trauma due to the underfunded American healthcare system. During Wong's hospitalization, the Disability Justice community came together and set up a GoFundMe entitled «Help Alice Stay in Community», which raised up to 342.248 USD (Wong, 2022a). These series of events emphasize the importance of leaving evidence and of developing independent care webs which help the community to resist in front of systemic violence enacted by the industrial medical complex to dispense with people with disabilities.

ableist 'normative' standard levels of capitalist accumulative logic to the oppression of disabled bodyminds. Disability Justice defends that people's worth is beyond capitalist productivity.

4. *Cross-movement solidarity*: Due to its intersectional stance, Disability Justice aims to trace alliances with contemporary transformative justice movements like «racial justice, reproductive justice, queer and trans liberation, prison abolition, environmental justice, anti-police terror, Deaf activism, [and] fat liberation» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 24).
5. *Recognizing wholeness*: Disability Justice does not conceive of disabilities as a lack, loss, or shortage. «Disabled people are whole people» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 24) with whole life experiences, histories, ancestries, and knowledge.
6. *Sustainability*: building spaces to share our experiences and create communities, Disability Justice develops strategies of resistance and resilience learning from each other about the best ways to sustain our lives long-term. This is part of the transformative collective knowledge of the collective movement.
7. *Commitment to cross-disability solidarity*: one of Disability Justice's main critiques on Disability Rights was its focus on visible disabilities, mainly mobility impairments. In contrast, Disability Justice recognizes the disability identity of people with vulnerable mental health, chronic illnesses or pain, intellectual disabilities, D/deaf people and B/blind people, and people with chemical sensitivities. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 25)
8. *Interdependence*: in contrast with the Modern independent and autonomous subject, a Disability Justice framework advocates for system theory views of the subject, recognizing the interdependence within communities and the collective work involved in covering everyone's needs.
9. *Collective Access*: Although the concept of Access will be further developed in upcoming sections of this dissertation, it is worth noting that Disability Justice already recognizes the variety of access needs. Access needs are a shared responsibility that should be met balancing personal autonomy and respect for the community.
10. *Collective Liberation*: Finally, Disability Justice claims that «[w]e move together as people with mixed abilities, multiracial, multi-gendered, mixed class, across

the sexual spectrum, with a vision that leaves no bodymind behind. This is disability justice» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 26). The principle of *Leave No Bodymind Behind*, which has been borrowed by human rights-centered approaches such as 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2016), is performed in Disability Justice with actions as explicit as adapting protest marches to the slowest, who would be placed in the first row to set the pace.

In chapter III, I argue that to fully understand the radical framework put forward by Disability Justice, one must grasp to what extent disability culture and community resists normativity and reframes the diversity of ways of being in the world as wholesome. This defines the expansive and non-normative character of Disability Justice, which fights to vindicate the life experiences of the most impacted, «many of which haven't even been realized yet due to the limited contexts where those with atypical bodies, minds and behavior can live on their own terms and realize the possibilities of disability experience» (Carmen Papalia, in conversation). One of the main figures in theorizing Disability Justice's expansiveness is Crip theorist Robert McRuer, who argues that Crip Theory:

can continuously invoke, to further the crisis, the inadequate resolutions that compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness offer us. And in contrast to an able-bodied culture that holds out the promise of a substantive (but paradoxically always elusive) ideal, crip theory would resist delimiting the kinds of bodies and abilities that are acceptable or that will bring about change. (McRuer, 2006: 31)

As stated above, Crip Theory is therefore developed by both Kafer (2010, 2013) and McRuer (2006, 2018) as a transformative justice proposal that aims to recognize the potential of crip tech and crip social epistemologies to disturb and transform the neoliberal systems that disable certain bodies and that have been ruling under a global imperative of austerity (McRuer, 2018: 4, 176). After presenting Disability Justice, we can recognize the strong bonds and webs of collective resistance that exist between the latter and CDS proposals such as Crip theory, which derive from having a common desire for social change and transformative justice in favor of diversity, and a strong abolitionist will against ableist oppressive systems.

5. Current research trends in CDS and contextualization of the research topic

Within the broader research lines established, during the last decade, CDS has been characterized for a special interest in the following research trends. These trends are distinct from the broad lines or hot spots to the extent that they are currently being developed by a community of researchers who already constitute an organized network. Having established CDS as a research discipline in the section above, I will examine CDS journals insofar as they are the medium for communication and discussion, as specialized journal articles have become «the predominant type of output, with increasing importance even in those disciplines where traditionally the monograph has been the primary means of publication» (Wakeling *et al.*, 2019). Following these criteria, I will draw on the special issues of the three most prolific CDS journals between 2011 and 2021: *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, *Critical Disability Discourses*, *Disability Studies Quarterly* and *Review of Disability Studies; An International Journal*. I exclude the general issues since they do not show a community of researchers with a shared interest that can be evidence of a research trend. Departing from the following tables, three trends are highlighted, strategically chosen because of their potential of dialogue with contemporary Pragmatists research, a dialogue that will be explored when discussing DJ principles on chapter III.

Table 1. Special Issues in CDS Journals: *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*

Issue	Special Issue Title
<i>Vol. 10 No. 2 (2021)</i>	VIBE: Challenging Ableism and Audism Through the Arts
<i>Vol. 9 No. 5 (2020)</i>	Disability Studies in Education—Critical Conversations
<i>Vol. 9 No. 3 (2020)</i>	Sites and Shapes of Transinstitutionalization
<i>Vol. 9 No. 2 (2020)</i>	The Intersections of Critical Disability Studies and Critical Animal Studies
<i>Vol. 8 No. 6 (2019)</i>	Cécités et créations
<i>Vol. 8 No. 4 (2019)</i>	Survivals, Ruptures, Resiliences: Perspectives from Disability Scholarship, Art and Activism
<i>Vol. 8 No. 2 (2019)</i>	Disability and/in/through Fanfiction
<i>Vol. 8 No. 1 (2019)</i>	Crippling the Arts in Canada
<i>Vol. 5 No. 3 (2016)</i>	Telling Ourselves Sideways, Crooked and Crip
<i>Vol. 2 No. 4 (2013)</i>	Crippling Cyberspace: A Contemporary Virtual Art Exhibition Curated by Amanda Cachia

<i>Vol. 1 No. 2 (2012)</i>	Disability Mediations
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Table 2. Special Issues in CDS Journals: *Disability Studies Quarterly*

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Special Issue Title</i>
<i>Vol 41, No 3 (2021)</i>	Disability and COVID-19
<i>Vol 38, No 3 (2018)</i>	Blindness Arts
<i>Vol 37, No 4 (2017)</i>	Special Issue: Disability, Work and Representation: New Perspectives
<i>Vol 35, No 3 (2015)</i>	The Americans with Disabilities Act After 25 Years
<i>Vol 35, No 2 (2015)</i>	Interventions in Disability Studies Pedagogy
<i>Vol 34, No 2 (2014)</i>	Growing Disability Studies
<i>Vol 33, No 4 (2013)</i>	Improving Feminist Philosophy and Theory by Taking Account of Disability
<i>Vol 33, No 3 (2013)</i>	Double issue: Museum experience and blindness; General Issue
<i>Vol 33, No 2 (2013)</i>	Self-reflection as scholarly praxis
<i>Vol 33, No 1 (2013)</i>	Disability and Madness
<i>Vol 32, No 3 (2012)</i>	Double Special Issue: "Movement Politics" & "Work and Disability: Toward Re-conceptualizing the 'Burden' of Disability"
<i>Vol 31, No 4 (2011)</i>	Mediated Communication
<i>Vol 31, No 3 (2011)</i>	Disability and Rhetoric

Table 3. Special issues in CDS Journals: *Review of Disability Studies; An International Journal*

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Special Issue Title</i>
<i>Vol. 17 No. 3 (2021)</i>	Conference Proceedings of the 36th Annual Pacific Rim International Conference on Disability & Diversity
<i>Vol. 15 No. 3 (2019)</i>	Disability and Shame
<i>Vol. 14 No. 3 (2018)</i>	Dismantling Ableism: The Moral Imperative for School Leaders
<i>Vol. 14 No. 2 (2018)</i>	The Crip, The Fat and The Ugly in an Age of Austerity: Resistance, Reclamation and Affirmation
<i>Vol. 13 No. 4 (2017)</i>	Crippling Care: Care Pedagogies and Practices

Among the special issues published by CDS journals, one can find a reiterated interest in Education, the Arts, and Crip Theory. It is, I argue, in the intersection of *Crip epistemologies* and artistic practice as a space for education that we can find the blossoming core of CDS today, a core that has the potential of becoming the generative matrix through which we can alter the institutionalized barriers posed by structures of oppression that disable non-normative bodies in the art world and beyond. By Crip epistemologies I understand the kind of social epistemologies developed in Crip Theory mainly by scholars Robert McRuer (2006) and Alison Kafer (2013), as well as the Crip Tech vindicated by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha in *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (2018a). Although academic and discursive CDS is very actively exploring this ground now, it is important to emphasize how the solidarity between intersectional epistemologies of the oppressed has been the bedrock of the praxis of disability justice activists for more than thirty years now. Transformative justice activists developed their practice with the affinity and solidarity of other groups of resistance, like the alliance between the Black Panther Party and Disability Rights Movement activists during the 504 sit-ins in San Francisco, 1977 (Schweik, 2011).



Fig. 4 Black Panther Party Newspaper, May 7, 1977, describing the 26-day sit-in for the 504 protest in San Francisco. Courtesy of Billy X Jennings: [Black Panther Party Archives](#) Retrieved from [Disability Social History Project](#).

Along the same line, current CDS scholars, artists, and activists are tending towards intersectionality where issues of gender, race, class, and disability are considered

conjointly as an interconnected fabric. It is for this reason that I will as well take into account the relevant festivals and public arts events that have contributed to these debates through research-in-practice, led by the main figures pushing critical disabilities arts and culture beyond in the sphere of English-speaking arts institutions. It is worth mentioning here the contributions of the curatorial practices of Amanda Cachia (2013, 2019a, 2023), Fayen d'Evie and Georgina Kleege (2018); the creative research of Aaron McPeake (2017) and Carmen Papalia (2021) in plastic arts; and of Mia Mingus (2011), Matthew Rader (2019), and Alice Wong (2020, 2022) in creative writing. In the case studies of chapter 4, I will focus on curatorial practices and plastic arts in Access Arts to highlight the transformative and liberatory potential of such contributions. Moreover, there has been an unprecedented rise of CDS in mass culture since 2019. Initiatives like the Disability Futures fellowship by Ford Foundation (2020), which awards \$50,000 to 20 artists, filmmakers, and journalists. Disability Futures promotes the dissemination of CDS languages and concerns in mass media and beyond the academic sphere. (Messman, 2020). In 2020, the Ford and Mellon Foundation awarded initiatives as diverse as journalist Alice Wong's Disability Visibility Project; director and producer Jim LeBrecht, for his Netflix documentary *Crip Camp* (2020)²¹; performer and writer Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha for her work in *Sins Invalid* since 2009; and Mia Mingus for her work as a journalist and writer with the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective and in the blog *Leaving Evidence* (Ford Foundation, 2020). The Ford Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation also produced a two-day festival featuring performances, conversations, and a virtual dance party with the fellows and other invited disabled artists, writers, performers, and designers (Cherokee Phoenix, 2021).

6. The triad of CDS methodologies: Open Access, Trauma-Informed Care, Bottom-up methodologies

Bearing in mind the main research trends of CDS and having identified their core as the *intersection of Crip epistemologies and artistic practice as a space for education*, in what follows three methodologies of CDS will be presented as the backbone that governs both CDS and Disability Justice Practices: Open Access, Trauma-Informed Care and Bottom-

²¹ The film was acclaimed from critics, and it received an Academy nomination for Best Documentary Feature in 2021 (Academy of Motion Picture, 2021).

up methodologies. In contrast with the hot spots and trends analyzed in the previous sections, these three methodologies do not define the *what*, neither the topic of interest in research nor the issues addressed in activism, they have to do with the *how*. That is, they are three Disability Justice-informed organizing methodologies that are transversal in both theory and praxis. Therefore, they constitute a structure that upholds and sustains CDS and which has also guided the development of this dissertation insofar as it has been majorly informed in open access and disability culture co-created (mostly virtual) spaces. The characterization of each methodology is directed towards presenting it to a Pragmatist public, and for this reason, I will make explicit how CDS methodologies resonate with the past and current praxis of this movement. Here, the problem already pinpointed by Charlene Haddock Seigfried about «what is identifiably pragmatist about the writings of the pragmatists» reappears (Seigfried, 1996: 6). I will follow her provisional characterization of Pragmatism to align this dissertation with the movement, since what will be explored is aligned with the basic premises she outlines as shared among the different expressions of Pragmatism:

Pragmatism, as a philosophy that stresses the relation of theory to praxis, takes the continuity of experience and nature as revealed through the outcome of directed action as the starting point of reflection. Experience is the ongoing transaction of organism and environment ... Knowledge is guided by interests or values ... Values, which arise in historically specific cultural situations, are intelligently appropriated only to the extent that they satisfactorily resolve problems and are judged worth retaining ... Pragmatist ethics is naturalistic, pluralistic, developmental and experimental. It reflects on the motivations influencing ethical systems, examines the individual developmental process wherein an individual's values are distinguished from those of society, situates moral judgments within problematic situations irreducibly individual and social, and proposes as ultimate criteria for making decisions the value for life as growth. (Seigfried, 1996: 6-7)

The methodology presented in what follows will make palpable how the Pragmatist conception of experience as a continuum that cannot be compartmentalized shapes the research conducted here. The contextualization of value systems as historically specific enables an awareness of their contingency and opens the door to creatively exploring value systems that resolve the problems of our present. This dismantling of non-functioning (and as it will be argued oppressive) value systems is performed with the aim of developing ethics that are capable of accommodating the growth of different bodyminds – in the case of Disability Justice, Ocularcentrism is dismantled in favor of experimental access

measures and mutual aid that make possible socially the growth of disabled bodyminds.²² It is this resonance with an experimental, reorganizational and situated philosophy that is committed to taking charge of their present problems that make the core animating principle of this dissertation Pragmatist – this commitment will be expressed in the embracement of CDS methodologies Open Access, trauma-informed care, and bottom-up methodologies.

6.1. Open Access: Situatedness, historicity, and tactility

Accessibility has been a central topic in Disability Studies even before the emergence of CDS, for instance with the development of Universal Design in both graphic design and architecture (Hamraie, 2017) as a best practice. In CDS accessibility is usually referred to as Open Access and acquires a performative dimension that the static notion of accessibility did not have. In «A New Model for Access in the Museum» (Papalia, 2013a) and «An Accessibility Manifesto for the Arts» (Papalia, 2018), Carmen Papalia defines Open Access as «a creative, long-term process ... not just about the built environment, but about ideas of agency and power» (Papalia, 2018). Open Access is therefore a process, which is embodied and situated in a particular space, usually, one that has its normal use disrupted by a divergent kind of embodiment that is not *fitting* the space it accesses. Open Access is, as Papalia puts it: «the root system of embodied learning. It cultivates trust among those involved and enables each member to self-identify and occupy a point of orientation that is based in complex embodiment.» (Papalia, 2018). Complex embodiment is a notion put forward by CDS scholar Tobin Siebers. In *Disability Theory* (2008), Siebers defines the notion as follows:

the theory of complex embodiment views the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal. Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative. Social representations obviously affect the experience of the body. (Siebers, 2008: 25)

²² I adopt the term ‘bodyminds’ throughout this dissertation to emphasize a non-dualist conception of individuals that does not separate body and mind, as Cartesian anthropology does. Moreover, I believe ‘bodymind’ is successful in making more explicit the embodiment of individuals as organisms than other more abstract terms (‘inindividual’, ‘person’). In doing so, I follow the lead of Feminist Disability Studies and Feminist Crip Theory scholars Eli Clare, Alison Kafer, and Sami Schalk (see Clare, 2017; Kafer, 2013; Schalk, 2018).

Through Open Access, we can disrupt the oppressive and disabling structures and imagine other possibilities for occupying space. By doing so, it «reimagines normalcy as a continuum of embodiments, identities, realities, and learning styles» (Papalia, 2018) and therefore imagines different social distributions of the senses. We must add that Open Access is radically democratic in the sense that it is

a temporary, collectively held space where participants can find comfort in disclosing their needs and preferences with one another. It is a responsive support network that adapts as needs and available resources change. (Papalia, 2018)

This adaptation depends on a special kind of knowledge of access needs, which Mia Mingus has designated as *access intimacy* (Mingus, 2011). Open Access is therefore a democratic process of aesthetic embodied education where collective needs are supported and embodied knowledge is achieved through the self-awareness of one's complex embodiment and orientation towards (human and non-human) others. For us, Open Access constitutes a standpoint from which we can evaluate specific distributions of the senses and weigh how touch and tactile needs – and by extension multisensory access needs – are supported in a specific collectivity in situated time and space. Although I will develop the notion of Open Access as a collectively held space further when discussing Disability Justice principles (Papalia, 2018), I want to allude to a possible connection with Pragmatism. As I will argue, Open Access can be a territory of exploration for Pragmatism insofar it resembles Dewey's conception of a democratic institution understood as a processual everchanging and contextual expression of habits that is always re-negotiated depending on people's needs (Dewey, 1981 [1927]).

6.2. Trauma-informed care

The second backbone methodology used is that of care, particularly of Trauma-informed care that attends to the complexities of care dynamics that appear when it is approached from an intersectional standpoint. It is of special relevance how care in CDS is not treated as a single-issued topic, but rather acquires a multi-dimensional character that emphasizes its relational nature and extends it up to the point where it becomes the structural practice of interdependent communities. Care as a methodology has deep philosophical implications for CDS methodologies and epistemologies, since it entails a kinship with Pragmatist Care Ethics that considers «what it is to be a person first and foremost from

our immersions in relationships rather than as an individual apart from these relationships or as a position in a social structure» since the idea of autonomy «is inherently too rationalistic and individualistic to explain impact of social forces, including race and color» (Willett, 2012: 170). Therefore, care inscribes CDS in the lineage of Care Ethics²³ and, as I will argue in the third chapter when discussing Disability Justice principles, specially the Pragmatist trend of Care Ethics which has been vastly developed by Maurice Hamington in *Embodied Care* (2004) and *The Social Philosophy of Jane Addams* (2009).

CDS and Care Ethics are recently exploring their intersections, as it is manifested in Eva Feder Kittay's contribution to *Care Ethics in The Age of Precarity* (Hamington & Flowers, 2021). Kittay connects care to political precarity and the social model of Disability, rooting her care ethics in Disability Justice's principle of interdependence, and arguing that a social ontology of interdependence

begins with the fact of inevitable dependency and depends on an acknowledgment of our inextricable interdependency. We begin with the relationship that we have all found ourselves in, being fully dependent on a caring person. And that caring person is herself dependent on other individuals and social, economic, and political systems that she requires to sustain herself, her dependent, and the relatedness that dependency care demands ... Any adequate political/social/economic system will need to acknowledge that at the heart of all social organization is the care and protection of dependent people. All else is built around this. (Kittay, 2021: 44)

The primacy of interdependence shapes both CDS conception of society as a web of interdependent relationships²⁴ and its practices, which are shaped around temporary,

²³ Care Ethics is a tradition usually defined as a Feminist trend in ethics due to its origins in Nel Noddings and Carol Gilligan's work (Noddings, 1982; Gilligan, 1982). Here, I consider the fundamental contribution of Care Ethics to be a shift toward privileging interdependence as the fundamental way of being in the world (in contrast with individualistic approaches) in ethics. Charlene Haddock Seigfried has revisited the notion of care in Pragmatist thought in *Pragmatism and Feminism: Reweaving the Social Fabric* (1996), as have the essays that constitute the third part of Hamington and Bardwell-Jones's volume *Contemporary Feminist Pragmatism* (2012). Eva Feder Kittay and Ellen K. Feder (2002) have worked on the intersections between feminist and disability perspectives of care work. Richard Shusterman has also developed a particular embodied and somatic notion of care in his *Somaesthetics* (2012a, 2012b, 2012c), most recently introducing considerations on pain and illness (Shusterman, 2019).

²⁴ In traditional Feminist Care Ethics, we find this notion in Virginia Held's *Feminist Morality*, where the author argues that the self «is seen as having both a need for recognition and a need to understand the other, and these needs are seen as compatible. They are created in the context of mother-child interaction and are satisfied in a mutually empathetic relationship» (Held, 1993: 60). That is, we are first and foremost part of relational units which do not entail a negative dependence from which we must break free. On the contrary, maintaining care webs and relationships «becomes a goal, and maturity is seen not in terms of individual autonomy but in terms of *competence in creating and sustaining relations of empathy and mutual intersubjectivity*» (Held, 1993: 60, my emphasis).

provisional structures that are attentive to caring for the access needs of those who are present. Privileging the social aspect of care echoes Jane Addams's philosophy of social ethics, that is, an understanding of care webs that is based on organic interconnection and democratic relationships instead of on normative rights-based moral systems (Addams, 2002 [1902]). This connection will be further developed below, so far, I will limit it to an emphasis on how current CDS methodologies primacy of interdependent care has made it from a more legal and individual-oriented notion of care – still present in accounts like Donald O'Neal's essay *The Lack of Care Act 2014* (2021) – to a collective understanding of community-build care networks that tend towards joy. This is implicit in the work of Mia Mingus (2011) around *access intimacy*. Explicitly, this is the standpoint of three leading writers and activists on CDS care: Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018a; Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha & Dixon, 2020), adrienne maree brown (2019), and Vo Vo (2020). In particular, Vo Vo advocates for anti-racist trauma-informed care that can reshape museums' structure and practices to become an effective agent of care. Trauma-informed care definitions such as Marcellus (2014: 307) focus the shift from traditional care into trauma-informed care on a change from hierarchical therapy to sharing power.

While traditional care is linked to medical models of rehabilitation and symptom reduction, trauma-informed care is a holistic approach to traumatic events where people suffering from the consequences of traumatic events define the primary goals of their own self-recovery. In addition to trauma-informed care, Vo Vo's anti-racist trauma-informed practice incorporates race and is directed not only to individual care practice, but also to collective cultural practices. As they present it, Vo Vo's anti-racist trauma-informed care is structure-directed and can serve as a heuristic for transformative justice in museum spaces and their policies (Vo Vo, 2021). Their relational care practice is defined as restorative and transformative. It recognizes coping strategies instead of aiming to eliminate them and punish them. In culture spaces, this implies celebrating cultural diversity and privileging the most impacted communities (Vo Vo, 2021). The main characteristic of anti-racist trauma-informed care is its abandonment of labeling and being judgmental in favor of centering diverse behaviors and marginalized culture. Vo Vo's proposal is especially suggestive when applied to artistic spaces, both heritage and contemporary museums and galleries, because it invites to rethink the policies and structure of these institutions.

6.3. Bottom-up methodologies in historical revisions

Making use of bottom-up methodologies when revisiting historical periods and views is already implicit in CDS principles of context and historic awareness when tackling any subject. However, in this dissertation, this inversion of top-down methodologies that start from a theory to analyze phenomena has been brought to a radical poignancy. This radicality probably has to do with the fact that the core of this study is aesthetic, in the sense of sensory, somatic, and felt. Therefore, the discursive revisions and interpretations that constitute the central chapters of the dissertation emerge out of lived experience and praxis. These lived experiences go from experiences of collective care work, personal encounters with artworks and museum spaces, and exchanges with the artists who kindly shared their processes with me. Together, they are the trigger out of which the question of how touch can be a subversive element to dismantle systems of oppression arises. It is for this reason that I will argue that aesthetics is a privileged field of intensity where many problems of CDS and Disability Justice overlap and intersect, a dense space for reflection that has the potential, on the one hand, to break down the barriers against which Disability Justice is struggling; and on the other hand, to be a fruitful territory for reflection and social imagination to formulate new question to the central issues of CDS.

It is through this basic level of somatic and sensorimotor experience that a new standpoint, in this case the standpoint of visual learners, can be built within our bodyminds – and then we can ask ourselves the question: how can we revisit the history of aesthetics that have shaped our artistic culture from the standpoint of nonvisual learners? Carmen Papalia usually formulates it as the following invitation: «consider everything from how cultures might have evolved if the origins of communication had centered on the tactile sense» instead of the visual (Papalia, 2014b). This inquiry is explored by Disability Justice artists through sensory disturbance that activates social imagination. Challenging the notion of normalcy, displacing the focus of our way of being in the world towards touch gives rise to cognitive «differences that make a difference» (Bateson, 1972). Changing our sensory patterns, we can change our cognitive habits as well, and consider something from a brand-new perspective. This practical methodology that begins with practice to then elaborate, revisit, and transform theory is ever-present in this dissertation. Despite the conventional ordering of the chapters, for reasons of clarity, the conceptual

contributions presented in the second and third chapters could not have been possible without the fundamental sub-theoretical fieldwork. Because of this, I may qualify this study as provisional, context-dependent, and experimental, a characterization that will be further developed when establishing the methodological framework in chapter II.

Provisionality is both the greatest strength and weakness of this research. It is a reading of the past from the present, for the immediate future. The grounding in the present is a commitment that gives a purpose to this academic proposal – obviously, no normative and total theory will be provided, no absolute system will make sense of aesthetic and resilience practices that disabled artists and activists have been performing for more than thirty years, after peeping on it from an ivory tower. Quite the opposite, this study is written for and with disabled artists and activist to build together a conceptual solid ground that strengthens the movement and that opens up new doors that may have been forbidden because disability arts and tactile practices were not considered legitimate, pure, worthy or ‘interesting’ enough to enter some of the temples of culture that we still worship. If the bottom-up methodologies result in actual transformative justice measures, then they will not be sterile. “Leave no one behind” means “do not let anyone’s access needs be uncovered”. If this dissertation contributes to this shift and dismantles access privilege even just an inch, then it will acquire some value. It may be the task of a new philosophy of touch to develop a vocabulary for these tactile practices which disrupts and unsettles the Ocularcentric conceptual bedrock that we have been using to talk about artistic practices, so that, instead of perpetuating socially disabling aesthetic experiences, we can create spaces for sensorial redistribution and thus social redistribution, disarraying and *denormalizing* the currently functioning structures of oppression over bodily and cognitive variation.

7. Aims, desires, and structure of the dissertation: *U Can't Touch This*

That girl is pretty wild now / The girl's a super freak / The kind of girl you read about / In the new wave magazines. (James and Miller, 1981)²⁵

The desire behind this research is to build a theoretical framework that constitutes an alternative to the still dominant Ocularcentrism that prevails in hegemonic aesthetics and institutionalized artistic practices. This framework aims to accommodate artistic practices that are being developed within Disability Justice and Access Arts, which respond to a set of aesthetic values that entail a multisensory distribution of aesthetic experience beyond visual appreciation both in performative and plastic arts. Due to the intersections between aesthetics and politics as will be defined, dismantling Ocularcentrism in aesthetics is part of a broader project which entails a reorganization of sensory regimes that vindicates and celebrates disabled bodyminds existence as politically valid and joyful ways of being in the world. The theoretical framework that I will trace in this dissertation – which departs from Disability Justice principles and draws on a myriad of liberation movements and philosophies – will hopefully make palpable how Disability Justice has an emancipatory and cohesive potential where many social justice movements can find their own place, not only as allies but also as committed agents. This confluence of movements and struggles will be shown through the organizational political practices performed in Disability Justice artistic practices as exemplary liberation and resistance tactics. It is precisely due to this cohesive potential that this dissertation reproduces the formula deployed by Disability Justice's solidarity manifestos: Disability Justice *is* Collective Liberation. What characterizes the current dissertation is a particular movement from the

²⁵ In 1981, *Super Freak* became the hit song of James Rick, a song about exploring sexuality and being adventurous with your own identity outside normativity. In American pop culture, there arises a connection between sex, individual expression, and the freak. In his book *Operation Freak*, Christian Flaugh has linked this conflation to the hyper-sexual abilities of the “Hottentot Venus” phenomenon, her active sexual life labeling her as the operated *monster de la culture* (Flaugh, 2012: 210). One can find a precedent to the appropriation of the freak as self-expression in *Le Freak* by Chic (1978), which became a staple in ballroom culture in the eighties. In 1989, MC Hammer went on to sample the hit to record *U Can't Touch This* (1990), which became his signature song when released. The assistant engineer for that track, Hot Mike (Michael Buckholtz) went on to become MC Hammer's producer and co-writer in the following albums by Capitol Records, like the vinyl and cassette *Too Legit to Quit* (1991). Afterward, Buckholtz, who himself was in the autistic and Asperger spectrum, would create the grassroots organization Aid For Autistic Children Foundation and publish a memoir entitled *Autism Is My Universe: ...So How 'Bout We "Not" Call It A Disability!* (2008). I find this palimpsest cluster of sound exchanges and nuanced identities a paradigmatic example of the complexity of the topic that will be tackled in this dissertation, even more, when adopting a CDS methodology that does not bypass the intersections of the senses with issues of disability, race, gender, and class.

sensoriality of these liberation practices towards its political significance – this movement can only be accounted for from a Pragmatist conception of the continuum of experience, which connects theory and praxis, and perception and cognition in an intimate way. When approaching the research on Disability Justice from this standpoint, we can make sense of the significance of introducing touch in DJ artistic practice as an essential component within a serious and deep philosophical and political project that aims to reorganize bodyminds.

But what is it that we fear so much about touch? Asking this question in 2023 is charged with many more implications than three years ago. We must acknowledge that the pandemic of COVID-19 has added a thick layer of phobia to the sense of touch, making us conscious of each and every interaction involving contact in our daily lives. However, the fear, suspicion, and disdain against the sense of touch in Western thought and philosophy date back to Greek and Hebrew antiquity. In this dissertation, I will argue that the standpoint of tactility provides a rich stock²⁶ for conceptualizing aesthetic experimentation and reflection around central issues of CDS, therefore challenging the Ocularcentric and ableist culture that has shaped Modern aesthetic experience. To do so, I will first trace what I will call *archaeology of touch*: a situated revisiting of the (hi)story of touch from the stance of CDS. This archaeology will focus on how tactile devices – discourses, techniques, and practices – have shaped the sensible distribution of the social and how they have been interrupted in points of *tactile intensity*, as will be denominated throughout the chapter.

These (hi)stories go from Antiquity to the dawn of the Modern era where museum institutions are established. The timeline is segmented into three sections. The first one covers Plato's light metaphors and its radicalization in Christian Neoplatonic interpretations. The second section, Christianity, includes Jewish inheritances of Christian embodiment and goes on to narrate the development of flesh and touch in Christianity

²⁶ I use stock here metaphorically, since it enables me to conjure both the connotation of a pool of resources that are supplied, and of the ancestry of our kindred lineages that are recovered in Disability Justice. Here it is worth mentioning two volumes published by Arsenal Press in 2022: Shayda Kafai's *Crip Kinship* (2022) and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's *The Future is Disabled* (2022). While the first one focuses on Sins Invalid and the role of art in Disability Justice activism that recovers hidden stories, the second weaponizes ancestral knowledges to build sustainable futures from the standpoint of disability. Sami Schalk has explored the intersections Black kinship and Disability Justice both in real cases (Schalk, 2022) and in the fictional ancestries created by Black women writers like Octavia Butler (Schalk, 2018).

from the Pauline conception and the Early Christian Fathers up to Women Mysticism in the Late Middle Ages. Thirdly, Protestantism is examined as the root of a secularization of a radical doctrine of the Fall that shapes Modern Sciences and Modern systems of knowledge which, in turn, would shape the distribution of the first public museums.

The second chapter establishes the methodological framework of the research that will enable me to make sense of Access Art as a practice that dismantles the Ocularcentric regimes of cultural heritages from Modernity established above. Departing from a distinction between the senses of touch and tactility as a sensory regime as defined in the political and aesthetic thought of Rancière, I borrow resources from Pragmatist theories of aesthetic experience to account for how Disability Justice-informed artistic practice have the potential to trigger, without a direct cause-effect relation, possible reorganizations of experience that can redistribute social and political ordering. This is further developed in the third chapter, where the ten Disability Justice principles that shape Access Art are examined in depth. For each principle, its historically generated need within the movement is narrated as its origins, followed by kindred approaches in other liberation movements that endow it with the philosophical implications it contains. Finally, I try to sketch how each principle will inform Disability Justice-based artistic practices in Access Arts as politically reorganizational and radically transformative.

In the final chapter leads us to concrete case studies of Disability Justice artists who are developing Access Arts, both curating and creating shared aesthetic experiences with a reorganizational potential. These are the stories of Amanda Cachia, Carmen Papalia, Collin van Uchelen, Georgina Kleege, and Fayen d'Evie. Through this itinerary, I hope to introduce with philosophical rigor and emphatical joy the different creative tactics deployed in Access Arts especially to Pragmatist audiences who may greatly benefit from developing a serious field of inquiry in conjunction with Disability Justice. Above all, the importance of networks of care, affects and access intimacy will be collected and reconsidered in the conclusions of this research.

CHAPTER I. THE JANUS-FACED ARCHAEOLOGY OF TOUCH: CHALLENGING THE HIERARCHY OF THE SENSES

The spirit of this chapter is archeologic insofar as we will try to analyze the role and displacements of touch in philosophy and value theory (including mythology and religion) which in turn shape a social epistemology that orders, enables, and forbids the uses of the senses. We will inquire on the origin, development, and discontinuities of discourses of touch, bringing forth their reasons, nature, and consequences in the embodied realities of people throughout the long history of Western thought. I will limit this archaeology to Western culture because it is out of this specific context that the organization of the senses in museums of Western Europe arises¹, in virtue of the beforementioned link between imperialist Eurocentrism and what Levin calls Ocularcentrism (Levin, 1993). I will examine discourses that shape the concealment of touch in Aesthetics from its emergence as a discipline with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's publication of *Aesthetica* in 1750.

This concealment was most notably diagnosed by American Pragmatist John Dewey in *Art and Experience*, for whom the body is a central and necessary condition for having an aesthetic experience; and more recently by Richard Shusterman's works in *Somaesthetics*, which signal Baumgarten's inaugural role in neglecting or rejecting the role of the body in aesthetic experience (Shusterman, 2012c: 7).² Within Critical Disability Studies, Georgina Kleege and Fayen d'Evie have coined the expression *tactile amnesia* to denominate such effacement in aesthetic experience (d'Evie and Kleege, 2018). In what follows, connections will be drawn between the disregard of touch in museum aesthetic experiences and other realms of value theory, especially theology and the sociology of religion, drawing mainly on Sarah Coakley's anthology *Religion and the Body* (1997). This is not an exhaustive historical account of the theological and normative dimensions of touch and the knowledge it provides since that purpose would be both over-ambitious and rather counterproductive for our current purposes. What is traced here is a

¹ Further research could investigate how different kinds of organizations appear in specific museums both in Eastern Europe and in non-European geopolitical contexts, and how the particular organization of the senses there is or is not also pervaded by thought constructs and value theory discourses. This is a line of research that Brandon Taylor has slightly suggested (Taylor, 1991: 24).

² See also Shusterman (1997); and his most recent reflections on aesthetics and pleasure (Shusterman, 2021).

genealogy that will help our understanding of the sources of the subsided status of touch in Modern hierarchies of the senses which is directly linked with Ocularcentrism, and a conception of the body as an object separated from lived experience and shaped by Euclidian geometry, the Vitruvian man and Renaissance's exaltation of harmony and symmetry, which find their contemporary reconceptualization in Le Corbusier's *Modulor*.³

To identify the source of this effacement of the body throughout the history of Aesthetics, the methodology of an *archéologie du savoir* as defined by Foucault will be carried out. In *L'archéologie du savoir* (1969), Foucault defines this methodology as an exploration of breaches, crevices, interruptions, and displacements that occur in a particular discourse, in our case in the philosophical evaluative discourse on touch:

We now seek to detect the incidence of interruptions. Interruptions of varying status and nature ... Displacements and transformations of concepts: the analyses of G. Canguilhem can serve as models; they show that the history of a concept is not in all and for all, that of its progressive refinement, of its continuously increasing rationality, of its gradient of abstraction, but that of its fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, of the multiple theoretical environments where its elaboration was pursued and completed. (Foucault, 1969: 11)

That is, traces of touch will be sought in discourses, specifically in the lineage of philosophical discourses that will be the base of contemporary aesthetics, although to trace that line I will resort to the basis of value theory found in the texts that establish what is taboo and what is totemic in our current Western (mainly) Christian European societies. I will use value theory in its broadest sense, as «a catch-all label used to encompass all branches of moral philosophy, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, and sometimes feminist philosophy and the philosophy of religion» (Schroeder, 2021). That is, those areas of philosophy which are considered evaluative, and which therefore put forward a judgment that configures a possible ordering of things. Therefore, the value theory and evaluative discourses I examine will be located always in the realm of *possibility*, and not in that of *necessity*. That is, the discourses I unearth merely constituted the «recurring redistributions which reveal several pasts, several teleologies» (Foucault,

³ For more on the normative dimension of the *Vitruvian Man* and the *Modulor*, see Amanda Cachia (2017b); and David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (2018). Mitchell and Snyder commissioned Selene Depackh, expert on autistic art and culture, to create *Vitruvian Man with CP*, the cover design for the volume. For the Vitruvian man as a historical normate see Aimi Hamraie (2017); and Vasilis Galis (2011).

1969: 11) that have governed the distribution of senses, and therefore of *sensing bodyminds* in the Greco-Christian tradition that has shaped contemporary Western societies' value systems.

This archaeology leads us to identify two genealogies in constant tension: a dominant genealogy which marks the sources of the concealment of touch, but also a minor genealogy that recovers points of tactile density, which are characterized by a vindication of the primacy of touch reigning over various discourses that characterizes specific periods in history at a specific location. The minor genealogy is minor quantitatively in virtue of its modest presence, but also because of its qualitatively peripheral and usually local character in contrast with the major dominant discourse. As Erin Manning puts it in *The minor gesture*:

The minor invents new forms of existence, and with them, in them, we come to be. These temporary forms of life travel across the everyday, making untimely existing political structures, activating new modes of perception, inventing languages that speak in the interstices of major tongues. ... [the minor] creates sites of dissonance, staging disturbances that open experience to new modes of expression. (Manning, 2016: 2)

Manning's *minor* corresponds to Canguilhem microscopic scale of history, and it is in these local punctual presences that the breaches of the general concealment of touch will be found.

Firstly, the dominant genealogy of touch will chronicle the systematic privation of touch allegedly brought about by Platonic and Cartesian dualisms in an interpretatively established epistemology and Christian moral writings and essays on value theory. As we will see, these two strains cannot be separated, on the contrary, they are entangled in such a way that they construct the very solid basis of a biased and discriminatory hierarchical structure of the senses that permeates a socially shared belief system and establishes touch as the lowest sense. Because of the prevalence of this sense hierarchy which endorses a simplified and strict demarcation of the senses proposed by Aristotle, complex sensory interaction is foreclosed from the beginning in ancient philosophies of the senses, having long-lasting effects in diverse modes of embodiment that do not fit in the ableist and neurotypical model across centuries, a model that is materialized in the fifteenth century by the Vitruvian man for whom the world is designed. And it is precisely in the fifteenth

century and the rise of the Renaissance that a vision-based design and architecture will be fully developed, design models that would continue until today, building around us a disabling world for a standard user who is, first and foremost, a viewer (Hamraie, 2017: 41-65). For instance, in museum spaces and galleries, the almost omnipresent rule of *Do not touch* implicitly makes such spaces inaccessible for people whose experience is not guided by sight, but who would be able to have an aesthetic experience through different kinds of intersensory engagement if the established *code of conduct* was more inclusive. Scholars Fiona Candlin and Constance Classen have examined how the prohibition of touch in museums is relatively modern and how it responds to a specific governance of bodies (Candlin, 2010; Classen, 2007, 2017).

Contrastingly, the minor genealogy of touch that is going to be presented is structured according to a *patching of microhistories and* aims to exhume the points of “tactile intensity” in specific discourses. The minor genealogy of touch is not to be understood as a parallel story that is separated from the dominant one, but rather as an underlying drive that reticulates the privation of touch, that intersects it constantly as a form of resistance, and that emerges in specific sparks, in flickering *karyological*⁴ moments. The minor becomes here a wellspring of resources from which a semantic field for tactile aesthetics can be developed. In the third chapter of this dissertation, these points will be revisited from the crossroads of Pragmatism and Critical Disability Studies, a joint approach that could be the point of departure for developing a tactile aesthetics discourse that can expand art writing and aesthetics towards non-visual learning and provide conceptual tools to account for contemporary artistic practices, specifically within disability arts and culture, where traditional discourses fall short. According to the distinction established, the debates on touch throughout Western thought history will unfold in this first chapter as follows. In Greek Philosophy, the concealment of touch will be enacted via the ontological and epistemological priority of vision in Plato’s thought, the obsession for demarcating touch as one of the five senses in Aristotle (and Neo-

⁴ Karyological time, or simply *kairós* (καίρός), refers to a time that was originally sacred: «*Kairós tou poiesai a Kyrio*» was the formula that inaugurated the time for the Lord to act in liturgy. However, since Renaissance’s political philosophy reappropriated it, *kairós* has become a term that distinguishes qualitative time from *chronos*, which is a disembodied quantitative time out of history. Karyological time is the time where significant events, occurrences that are historically charged, take place (Smith, 2002; Kinneavy, 2002).

Aristotelianism), and the Neoplatonic radicalization of the separation of intelligible and tangible entities, the former being closer to truth. Across the Middle Ages, I will focus on religious manifestations of the distribution of the senses, which lead to a disdain for touch across value theory (mainly in ethics and aesthetics). Finally, I will draw on contemporary Critical Disability Studies scholars to circle back to aesthetic experience and analyse the structures underlying how the emergence of museums gives rise to a code of conduct that criminalizes touch and erases embodiment from aesthetic experience.

Embodiment will be understood as the fact of being, having, inhabiting, and being associated with a body. However, as this chapter unfolds, it will become clearer that the status of touch and embodiment in Western thought is more nuanced than a deflationist approach that gets rid of touch entirely may suggest. In discourses within the dominant genealogy, touch remains still a very active element of resistance that operates as a disturbance-from-within and that cannot be omitted. Western philosophical and theological dualisms, adhering to what Patricia Hill Collins has called «the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought» (Collins, 1991: 225), had agreed in considering that embodiment, and thus tactile capacities, stem from a «fall from an originally superior state of either pure mental existence or of a more rarefied, ethereal or ‘pneumatic’ bodily existence» (Smith, 2017: 2) that divides in two separate entities body and soul. However, the status of our tactile sensory existence in virtue of our embodiment preserves its lights and shades. Touch will acquire a Janus-faced nature because it will be accounted for in theological normative terms as a failure, transgression, or violation, whereas at the same time the body and touch will become central in both worship and doctrine, for example in Saint Augustine’s theory of knowledge, in the Mysticism of Medieval Women, and in Late Medieval discussions on the Resurrection of the body.

To analyze the sources of the status of touch in different realms of value theory – moral, epistemological, aesthetic – it was necessary to approach sources in a way that enabled trans-discursive examination and provided a more holistic account of the status of touch throughout history. Specific tactics to trace our archaeology were borrowed from Weber’s sociology of religion (Weber, 2002), such as attending to the embodied practices that could be identified in the sources, and from Foucault’s notion of the codependence

of power and knowledge, such as looking for correlations between allegedly theoretical areas of value theory and the government of sensing bodyminds. This method has been particularly useful to approach religion as a social structure of distributing and organizing knowledge, power, and bodies in society. In Weberian terms, religious doctrines and rituals are structures that attribute social positions to the members of society, to which social roles are attached. This distribution of positions, which echoes Rancière's notion of the *partage du sensible* (Rancière, 2000), is inherited by future generations through education, which enables social reproduction. As time unfolds, this reproduction can enter in a process of transformation where religious structures are secularized.

However, I attempt to argue that despite such secularization, there are underlying religious structures that shape the hierarchy of the senses, thus perpetuating the distribution and organization of experience in many domains of social existence, and most importantly in museum environments and aesthetic encounters. Therefore, I claim that the theological distribution of social orders in a continuum between value and ban that will be established in this chapter, is being mirrored in a continuum between two trends in constant tension that are still moving forces in contemporary museum practice: an hegemonic Ocularcentric museology, and a tactile new museology explored by artists Fayen d'Evie and Georgina Kleege (2018) and curators like Amanda Cachia (2019a, 2020) (Fig. 5). This correspondence can only be defended from a sociological standpoint that broadens the scope of culture beyond the *beaux-arts* or high culture, including instead in the concept of culture the shared values, accepted rules, and material culture that shape domains as diverse as clothing, customs of marriage, religious ceremonies, modes of labor, pastimes and all the material goods produced by the members of a society which are meaningful for them (Giddens, 2001: 65). From this standpoint, cultural variations and social organization are reciprocally connected since different cultures articulate different systems of relationships among the members of a determinate society. It is culture that establishes what is 'normal' – what Garland-Thompson calls the *Normate* (Reynolds, 2019: 244)- and 'valuable', as well as what is 'shameful' and 'taboo'. I will adhere to a conception of complex embodiment developed by Tobin Siebers to account for how culture influences the distribution of the senses and the lived experience of touch. According to the theory of complex embodiment,

the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal. Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative. Social representations obviously affect the experience of the body. (Siebers, 2008: 25)

In what follows, I attempt to shed light on the religious structures that articulate the organization of the senses in Western culture with the conviction that unveiling such sources will enable a re-articulation of sensorial experience, in this case through the vindication of touch – a touch that is not merely phenomenological, but also informed by social conceptions of a lived body and what kinds of touch are fitting and which ones misfitting (Garland-Thomson, 2019: 225), as Tobin Siebers theorizes in the Complex Embodiment model (Siebers, 2008: 25-27). Such re-articulation needs the sources of the current state of affairs because, as Sheldon Pollock points out: «There is a natural tendency, exhibited even (or especially) in social and cultural theory, to generalize forms of life and experience as universal tendencies and common sense », and only comparison «offers an antidote ... by demonstrating the actual particularity of these apparent universalisms» (Pollock, 2006: 259). Only acknowledging the particular and contextual sources of the current organization of the senses, and attending to its nuances and alternative tendencies within, will we be able to modify our long-established orders of value in many cultural domains, accepting alternative ways of relating to the others, human and non-human, that can be triggered by different ways of articulating aesthetic encounters.



Fig.5 Two black and white diagrams list the characteristics of two trends in museology and their corresponding values. These two lists are not clearly separated, there is rather a fuzzy gradation distinguishing them, suggesting interaction and exchange among the two areas. On the left, sacred values above correspond to a formalist and visual Ocularcentric museology below. On the right, bans and taboos correspond to a tactile museology characterized by wide-awareness and strategies to incorporate touch in aesthetic experiences. Own elaboration based on research.

1. Greek Discontinuities, Dualisms and Demarcations⁵

1.1. Plato: the consequences of light metaphors and discontinuity

And the whole stream of vision, being similarly affected in virtue of similarity, diffuses the motions of what it touches or what touches it over the whole body, until they reach the soul, causing that perception which we call sight. (*Timaeus*, 37ab)

This archaeology of touch will explore the Western value inheritance that inhibits our contemporary secular perspectives on the status of touch, and how theological and normative dimensions have a direct effect on the epistemological value of touch, which shapes the organization of the senses in knowledge institutions such as museums. The primacy of vision in the Western tradition, denominated as Ocularcentrism by Levin (1993), will begin here with Plato and Neoplatonic readings of his work, followed by a short genealogy of Christian interpretations of the value of flesh, to end with the secularization of the damnation of touch through the Protestant Reform.

We can locate Plato's mentions about the role of touch and perceptions with regards to knowledge within a broader concern of his era, which was the appearance of the notion of the physical body in Ancient Philosophy. The parallel emergence of the body (σῶμα) and touch sheds some light on the relevance of the demarcating question: what is the organ of touch? Unlike the rest of the traditionally individualized senses, touch permeates the whole surface of the body and beyond, since touch includes texture, humidity and temperature perception, and pain, but also proprioception, kinesthesia, and the vestibular system. In parallel, the physical body emerges in medical texts and Platonic dialogues in the fifth- and fourth-century BCE, and it is not coincidental that Plato makes regular use of medical analogies. A further account focused on touch and embodiment in

⁵ Since in this chapter I will be looking for the archaeological traces of the concealment of touch in the vast history of Western thought across major traditions, it will not be possible to dig into the complexities of each of them. In the footnotes, I will be providing a curated bibliography that has been consulted but is not necessarily examined in depth in the section. The aim of these references is to serve as a map for further research for those interested. Concerning Greek Philosophy, on the priority of sight in Ancient thought see Rudolph (2016) and Nightingale (2016). For a panoramic of ancient conceptions of touch, see Purves' *Touch and the Ancient Senses* (2017). However, Purves's companion has the major shortcoming of lacking a chapter on Plato and Neoplatonism. The precedent volume by Butler and Purves, *Synesthesia and the Ancient Senses* (2013) does include a chapter by Ralph M. Rosen on Plato, beauty, and "philosophical synesthesia".

Ancient medical texts and how the medical conception was entangled with their philosophical consideration is provided in Holmes (2010: 346; 2014: 192-228; 2017).

However, whereas Hippocratic medical texts suggest an intimate relationship and codependence between mind/character and the physical body, Plato champions a conception of the body as something that can be differentiated from the human mind, soul, or consciousness.⁶ What is more, the soul (ψυχή), which is the part that rules over the physical body (σῶμα), is considered hierarchically superior to the body:

SOCRATES: And doesn't the soul rule the body?

ALCIBIADES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now here's something I don't think anybody would disagree with.

ALCIBIADES: What?

SOCRATES: Man is one of three things.

ALCIBIADES: What things?

SOCRATES: The body, the soul, or the two of them together, the whole thing.

ALCIBIADES: Of course.

SOCRATES: But we agreed that man is that which rules the body.

ALCIBIADES: Yes, we did agree to that. ...

SOCRATES: Since a man is neither his body, nor his body and soul together, what remains, I think, is either that he's nothing, or else, if he *is* something, he's nothing other than his soul.

ALCIBIADES: Quite so.

SOCRATES: Do you need any clearer proof that the soul is the man?

ALCIBIADES: No, by Zeus, I think you've given ample proof. (*Alcibiades*, 130a-c)

This vertical relationship is stated in Plato's ontology as presented in his Middle Dialogues, where the distinction between the visible world and the intelligible world is permeated with an asymmetry in value: the intelligible is deemed more valuable and of a higher existence, while the visible physical world is less valuable and even less real. However, the relationship between visible and intelligible is much more nuanced than it may feel at first, since the apparent clear-cut division is far from being a radical duality and is challenged even in Plato's own dialogues. For instance, the separation is questioned in Diotima's address in the *Symposium* (201d-215a), where there seems to be a continuity between the appreciation of beautiful bodies, beautiful souls, and the idea of Beauty.

⁶ A further account focused on touch and embodiment in Ancient medical texts and how the medical conception was entangled with their philosophical consideration is provided in Holmes (2017).

For our current purposes, however, I will limit myself to Plato's Middle Dialogues, specifically, *The Republic*, *Protagoras*, and *Theaetetus*, where scholars (Fine, 2003) seem to find the most coherent and systematic proposal of a Platonic ontology and epistemology. Special attention will be paid to the epistemological value attributed to the different ontological levels throughout these chapters since it will shed light on two aspects: first, the prevalence of *the metaphor of light for knowledge*, already mapped by Hans Blumenberg in 'Light as a Metaphor for Truth: At the Preliminary Stage of Philosophical Concept Formation' (Levin, 1993: 30-62), and second, the suggestion of a *discontinuity between the visible and the intelligible*. Once these two ideas have been presented, I will proceed to show how they were appropriated by Alexandrian Neoplatonism, mainly in the works of Plotinus, drawing to an extreme the discontinuity between the visible and the intelligible, and thus body and soul, which grew stronger in later interpretations of such Neoplatonism stemming from Porphyry's portrayal in *Life of Plotinus* (301? C.E.). It will be shown how the radically dualistic notion of sensible body and intelligible soul in Plato is a construct that is not evident from his dialogues, but which rather arises out of interpretations highly permeated by a desire for syncretism of Platonism with Christianity.

To begin with, for Plato it is not clear how our intelligible capacities can get a grip of the physical realm – only in *Timaeus* (37a-b) do we seem to find an account of how such a connection is possible, with a notably tactile wording, claiming that the soul *touches* (εφάπτεται) the physical bodies. This passage seems to turn around the usual hierarchy of the senses attributed to Plato,⁷ and instead of relying on light and visual metaphors, explains vision in virtue of touch in a way similar to that of Empedocles:

whenever daylight surrounds the visual stream, like makes contact with like and coalesces with it to make up a single homogeneous body aligned with the direction of the eyes. This happens wherever the internal fire strikes and presses against an external object it has connected with. And because this body of fire has become uniform throughout and thus uniformly affected, it transmits the motions of whatever it comes in contact with as well as of whatever comes in contact with it, to and through the whole body until they reach the soul. This brings about the sensation we call 'seeing.' (Plato, *Timaeus*, 45c-d)

⁷ On the historical relation of touch to sight in ancient thought, see Simon (2003: 65-69), Giuman (2013: 18-22), and Platt and Squire (2017). For an account of Plato's philosophy of mind and the status of touch among the senses see Knuuttila and Sihvola (2014), Silva and Yrjönsuuri (2014), and Thaler (2016).

That is, the stream of vision is conceived as a light that when deflected by an object is diffused, and this diffusion consists of a change in movement that when arrives at the organ of vision affects and *touches* the whole body, reaching the soul. In this passage from the *Timaeus*, vision is accounted for in terms of touch and motion – in haptic terms. Therefore, we have found two instances that challenge the hegemonical interpretation of a Platonic disdain for the physical world and the body: Diotima’s address in the *Symposium* and *Timaeus*. As noted by David Park, Empedocles’s theory of vision resonates with the one in *Timaeus* since it claims that:

An object gives off rays that carry information about its surface. To read this information, the eye projects forward a narrow visual ray that somehow feels the object’s radiation and returns through the pupil into the sensitive part of the eye, where it creates an image in the mind. The visual ray is like a long finger projecting from the eye and sight is a kind of touch. (Park, 1999: 7-10)

Then, what are the sources for the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato’s thought as a dualistic philosophy which vindicates the intelligible and condemns the physical? In this archaeology, we will establish three departure points that seem to pour oil upon the flames of a hierarchized radicalization of the separation between the two realms. First, the epistemological simile of the discontinuous line in *The Republic* which would be mirrored in a social discontinuous structure of citizenship; second, the rejection of the equation of knowledge and perception in *Theaetetus*, knowledge being the closest way to truth; and last, given the inferior status of sensory perception, the link between knowledge and restriction of sensual pleasure in *Protagoras*.

a) *The Republic*

In Book VI of Plato’s *The Republic*, Socrates presents the simile of the divided line as a rhetorical resource that has been taken as the basis of a Platonic theory of knowledge that, I will argue, focuses on an aspect that may seem secondary at first sight: its *discontinuity*. The simile of the divided line is presented as follows:

It is like a line divided into two unequal sections. Then divide each section—namely, that of the visible and that of the intelligible—in the same ratio as the line. In terms now of relative clarity and opacity, one subsection of the visible consists of images. And by images I mean, first, shadows, then reflections in water and in all close-packed, smooth, and shiny materials, and everything of that sort, if you understand ... In the other subsection of the visible, put the originals of these images, namely,

the animals around us, all the plants, and the whole class of manufactured things. (Plato, *Republic*, VI, 509d-510a)

In this passage, the two main divisions are that of the visible and the intelligible. These two realms are separated by a clear-cut border and correspond to different kinds of knowledge which are ordered in virtue of their value, so that knowledge of the intelligible is higher than knowledge of the visible. Within the visible, one finds two subdivisions. The lowest subdivision is that of likenesses of visible things, images and shadows – the least real and true – and its correspondent type of knowledge is *eikasia* (εἰκασία), opinion as imagination, sometimes translated as illusion. The second subdivision of the visible segment is that of the visible things (animals, and everything that grows, artifacts), and it provides a kind of knowledge that is *pistis* (πίστις), i.e., belief in physical things. In its turn, the intelligible segment is also divided:

Consider now how the section of the intelligible is to be divided ... As follows: In one subsection, the soul, using as images the things that were imitated before, is forced to investigate from hypotheses, proceeding not to a first principle but to a conclusion. In the other subsection, however, it makes its way to a first principle that is not a hypothesis, proceeding from a hypothesis but without the images used in the previous subsection, using forms themselves and making its investigation through them. (Plato, *Republic*, VI, 510b)

The segment that is found just above *pistis* (πίστις), is the realm of some ideas, like abstract mathematical objects and geometry, which are outside the physical world but involve the use of some kind of likeness. The corresponding knowledge is that of a recognizing thought – *dianoia* (διάνοια) or mathematical reasoning. Finally, the segment to which Socrates attributes the highest reality and truth is the one that consists of the realm of Ideas, which the soul knows by understanding, a *noesis* (νόησις) that makes «no use of images as in the former case» and moves «in and through the ideas themselves». What is perplexing and question-begging of this passage is how clearly the separation between the levels of reality and the type of knowledge is established. The question arises about what the relationship is between those realms of reality, and how does the individual shift from one mode of cognition to another. In the consecutive book of *The Republic*, Book VII, Plato yet again makes use of a rhetorical figure, that of an allegory, to explain how this transit between levels of knowledge consists of an ascendant path towards *noesis* (νόησις).

Once we have highlighted the discontinuous character of Plato's epistemology as presented in Book VI, the allegory of the cave will be brought forward to show how light is the pervasive metaphor for the ascension towards *noesis* and the higher reality. Therefore, the focus on this passage by Neoplatonic interpreters can be understood as setting the basis for the priority of vision and Ocularcentrism in Western thought.

In the allegory of the cave, presented by Socrates to Glaucon in Book VII of *The Republic*, the ascension towards knowledge of a prisoner condemned to illusion by watching the *shadows* of a cave who frees himself and reaches the *sunlight* is narrated in the following terms:

whenever someone tries through argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing and doesn't give up until he grasps the good itself with understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intelligible, just as the other reached *the end of the visible* ... And what about this journey? Don't you call it dialectic? (Plato, *Republic*, VII, 532a-b, my emphasis)

The transit from perception, which constitutes the lowest knowledge of the least real and true of existence, towards a thought only guided by reason is mirrored by a journey from darkness and shadows to light. The summit of such a journey, the intellectual world, is not even the sight of figures anymore, but the sight of pure light and luminescence «at the end of the visible». Throughout this path, the freed prisoner goes across different ascendant stages which enable his sight to slowly get used to lighter and lighter things, that is, cognition is trained to proceed from physical images to reasoning that does not need these images anymore and proceeds «using forms themselves» (510b). The narration of the release of the prisoner from chains is saturated by metaphors of light and vision, it is the *Bildungsroman* of «the turning around from *shadows* to statues and the light of the fire and, then, the way up out of the cave to the *sunlight* and, there, the continuing inability to look and the animals, the plants, and the *light of the sun*» (Plato, *Republic*, VII, 532b-c, my emphasis). The “weak eyes” go from shadows to true existence, elevating their sight to the highest principle – «that which is best among the things that are» (Plato, *Republic*, VII, 532c), of which the sun is an allegory in the narration. The metaphoric use of vision in Plato's ontology may be seen as an early prophecy of the primacy of vision as the noblest sense and the highest source of knowledge in Modern psychology, and even its

metaphorical dimension will persist throughout the centuries, through Christian doctrine – both in its metaphors and in its aesthetics: God as light and illuminated epiphanies –, but also in the credo of apparently revolutionary and anti-totalitarian movements such as the *Enlightenment*, le *Siècle des Lumières*, which appropriated metaphors of light to exemplify thought, rationality and truth.

b) *Theaetetus*

The primacy of vision and light and the dispatching of physical bodies in *The Republic* is coupled with the dismissal of the senses in *Theaetetus*. In this Platonic dialogue, Socrates inquires Theodoros's pupil Theaetetus about the nature of knowledge. After giving some examples of kinds of knowledge, Theaetetus puts forward the answer that knowledge is perception. Socrates links such perceptions to the body, since «the instruments through which you perceive hot, hard, light, sweet things—do you consider that they all belong to the body?» (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 184e). Taking this into account, the status he attributes to perceptions in knowledge will give us some hints as to what the value of the body and touch is in Plato's epistemology. For Plato, touch was considered three different senses, distinguished by their phenomenological character: pressure, temperature, and pain (Classen, 1993).

Interestingly enough, this is consistent with modern psychophysics' acknowledgment of three different kinds of skin receptors: mechanoreceptors, thermal receptors, and nociceptors; which in turn involve different submodalities that segregate functions (Saal & Bensmaia, 2014: 688). For instance, only within mechanoreceptors, «one afferent population mediates shape and texture perception, another motion perception, a further one skin stretch perception, and the last vibration perception» (Saal & Bensmaia, 2014: 689). Then, can this segregation justify the division of touch in three senses, as proposed by Plato? If we pay attention to recent physiological evidence, despite the distinction between afferent populations, Saal and Bensmaia also point out that

most afferent classes are excited by most tactile stimuli, and that information from all afferent classes needs to be taken into account to explain perceptual judgments. Somatosensory cortical neurons serving any one function are therefore likely to receive input from multiple submodalities. (Saal & Bensmaia, 2014: 690)

After some considerations about through which sense organ we perceive each quality, which reminds us of the discussion on the proper objects of the senses in Aristotle's *De Anima*, Socrates asks how one can compare two qualities perceived through the senses, and how one can tell whether they are the same quality or different ones. He inquires Theaetetus as follows:

SOCRATES: Good. Now through what does that power function which reveals to you what is common in the case both of all things and of these two—I mean that which you express by the words 'is' and 'is not' and the other terms used in our questions about them just now? What kind of instruments will you assign for all these? Through what does that which is percipient in us perceive all of them?

THEAETETUS: You mean being and not-being, likeness and unlikeness, same and different; also one, and any other number applied to them. And obviously too your question is about odd and even, and all that is involved with these attributes; and you want to know through what bodily instruments we perceive all these with the soul ...

SOCRATES: And thus there are some things which all creatures, men and animals alike, are naturally able to perceive as soon as they are born; I mean, the experiences which reach the soul through the body. But calculations regarding their being and their advantageousness come, when they do, only as the result of a long and arduous development, involving a good deal of trouble and education.

THEAETETUS: Yes, that certainly is so.

SOCRATES: Now is it possible for someone who does not even get at being to get at truth?

THEAETETUS: No; it's impossible.

SOCRATES: And if a man fails to get at the truth of a thing, will he ever be a person who knows that thing?

THEAETETUS: I don't see how, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Then knowledge is to be found not in the experiences but in the process of reasoning about them; it is here, seemingly, not in the experiences, that it is possible to grasp being and truth.

THEAETETUS: So it appears.

SOCRATES: Then in the face of such differences, would you call both by the same name?

THEAETETUS: One would certainly have no right to.

SOCRATES: Now what name do you give to the former—seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling cold or warm?

THEAETETUS: I call that perceiving—what else could I call it?

SOCRATES: So the whole lot taken together you call perception?

THEAETETUS: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: Which, we say, has no share in the grasping of truth, since it has none in the grasping of being.

THEAETETUS: No, it has none.

SOCRATES: So it has no share in knowledge either.

THEAETETUS: No.

SOCRATES: Then, Theaetetus, perception and knowledge could never be the same thing. (*Theaetetus*, 185c-186e)

In other words, sensual perception is not knowledge in itself, it is a preliminary process that enables a different process carried out through reasoning – the power which discerns universal notions. Therefore, touch and the other senses are dismissed as *means for* reaching a knowledge that can only be attained by reasoning and that is not concerned with the particular perceived quality, but on the contrary with universal notions. Perception does not have epistemological value in itself, it is merely a preamble or preparation for knowledge, which circling back to *The Republic* is concerned with higher reality and truth – the realm of universal ideas. It is in virtue of this lower status of sensible perception and bodily experience in Platonic proportions that Alexandrian interpreters also influenced by Christian scriptures will disdain physical existence as a fall of the spirit which is «dragged down to a lower order, molded into the crasser and more solid condition of a body» (Origen, 1979: 2.2.2), as Origen puts it, which becomes at the same time an obstacle and the means for reaching the divine knowledge, the Logos which constitutes the “idea of ideas”. It is this Janus-faced nature as both obstacle and junction with the highest ideas that will lead Christian Neoplatonists of Alexandria to regard sensations and the body as both *helper* and *enemy*.

c) *Protagoras*

In Plato’s dialogue *Protagoras*, Socrates discusses with the Sophist Protagoras two main questions: the relationship between virtue and knowledge, and whether pleasure is good – two issues closely connected to the status of bodily existence as a helper towards virtue, or as an enemy that prevents us from reaching such existence in communion with the spiritual just aforementioned. At the crossroads between these problems, the question concerning the relationship between intellectual knowledge and bodily well-being arises. Since intellectual virtue is accompanied by a kind of knowing how to take care of oneself, Socrates argues that a virtuous citizen is one who understands what measures must be taken to attain a healthy body, and therefore knows how to restrict pleasure to prevent it from becoming noxious. Being overcome by pleasure is, for Socrates, a result of ignorance and bad reasoning, since «knowing, understanding, and remembering, and what belongs with them, right opinion and true calculations, are better than pleasure and more agreeable to all who can attain them» (*Philebus*, 11b).

According to Socrates, «those who make mistakes with regard to the choice of pleasure and pain, in other words, with regard to good and bad, do so because of a lack of knowledge, and not merely a lack of knowledge but a lack of that knowledge you agreed was measurement» (*Protagoras*, 357d-e). Being overcome by pleasure is an act of erring, and an erring act is an act performed in ignorance. In this passage, by showing how temperance is a kind of knowledge, Socrates attempts to prove that virtue is entirely knowledge and therefore can be taught. However, those who indulge themselves in «things that are disadvantageous to humans, foods and drinks and drugs» (*Protagoras*, 334a) are erring because of the evil consequences, but not simply because they immediately give themselves to pleasure. Being overcome by pleasure is erring because in it one ignores the diseases, pain, and poverty that may come as a consequence, which will in the future rob one from other pleasures. That is, Socrates is arguing for measurement in pleasure so that future pleasures are not self-sabotaged – it is not a damnation of sensual pleasure *in itself*, but rather only when it prevents us from other pleasures. However, this restriction of being overcome by pleasure was transformed, in a syncretism with Christianity, into a damnation of flesh as sinful, or as 17th Century Cambridge Platonist Anne Conway later put it, a discredit of the body as ‘lazy’ and ‘sluggish’ (Conway, 1996: 29).

1.2. Aristotle and the difficult individuation of touch

Human taste is more exact because it is a sort of touch, and this perceptual capacity is most exact in a human being. For in the others he is inferior to many animals, but in touch he is much more exceedingly exact than the rest. That is why he is also the wisest of the animals. An indication of this is that members of the human race (*genos*) are naturally well-disposed or naturally ill-disposed depending on this perceptual organ and no other, since the hard-fleshed ones are naturally ill-disposed for thought, whereas the soft-fleshed ones are naturally well-disposed. (*De Anima*, 421a15–26)

As it has been shown, the problem of touch raises in Ancient Philosophy in parallel with the question of what a body is. Amidst a tendency to demarcate and order their surrounding both social and natural world, touch continued to be a challenge (and even of higher priority and salience) for Aristotle, who had a greater taxonomical impulse to classify and order reality.

In his analysis of the senses in *De Anima*, II, chapter 6 and 11, Aristotle establishes a relation between the senses and sensible qualities of the objects. However, as Sorabji puts it in «Aristotle on Demarcating the Five Senses»: although «one is defined by reference to the other, Aristotle has no special interest in defining sense objects by reference to senses» (Sorabji, 1971: 57). So, the main aspect of the defining relation, despite it being bidirectional, is that of the senses being defined by reference to the sense objects. In dealing with the senses, Aristotle focuses on the objects which are perceptible by each sense in order to demarcate the different sense modalities. In *De Anima*, he distinguishes three kinds of objects: proper objects, common sensibles and incidental objects (*De Anima*, 418a).

Proper objects are those which can be perceived by one and only one sense. The proper object of vision is color, of hearing is sound, and of taste it is flavor. However, when getting to the perceptible objects that touch discriminates, Aristotle says: «touch has several different ones» (*De Anima*, 418a10). *Common sensibles* are those objects or qualities that can be perceived by more than one sense: movement, rest, number, figure, and magnitude, which are not proper to a particular sense modality, but rather common to many. Thirdly, *incidental objects* are indirectly perceptible, for example: «That orange thing is a backpack». That «it is a backpack» is only sensed in virtue of perceiving the visible orange patch, whose color, size, and figure are directly perceptible. The sense of touch constitutes an exception within Aristotle's definition of the senses, since in *De Anima* he is unable to find a proper object for touch, and in the hierarchy of the five senses, touch is the basest and lowest sense, whereas sight is located at the most superior stratum as the most valuable of the senses.

Touch is an element of discrepancy. On the one hand, regarding its mode of perception, it is related to taste because it shares the necessity of immediate contact (*De Anima*, 423b), which leads Aristotle to argue that taste is a variety of touch. On the other hand, with regards to its proper object, the first difficulty that arises is that its objects are extremely varied and that many of these are apprehended as well by other senses, for instance, shape and size are perceived by sight too. On the irreducible variety of objects of touch, Sorabji points out in a footnote:

Aristotle might be able to shorten the list of objects [of touch] somewhat, thanks to his view that coarse and fine, viscous and brittle, hard and soft, come from dry and fluid (G. & C. [*De Generatione et Corruptione*] 329b32-34). In fact, he says all the other objects of touch are reducible to the basic four, dry and fluid, hot and cold (G. & C. [*De Generatione et Corruptione*] 329b34, 330a24-26). If this is so, might he not be able to specify the objects of touch as dry and fluid, hot and cold, and other properties reducible to these? Such a specification runs two opposite risks. It would let in the objects of other senses if any of these are reducible to dry, fluid, hot, or cold. At the same time, it is not clear how it would accommodate heavy and light, rough and smooth. [...] In any event, he can at best shorten the list of objects of touch. He cannot eliminate the irreducible difference between the pair, hot and cold, and the pair, dry and fluid. (Sorabji, 1971: 68)

Aristotle individuated the senses in virtue of their proper object. According to this criterion, each of the five senses had a proper defining property, a feature that was only perceived by one sensory modality. The proper object of sight was color; of hearing, sound; of smell, scent. However, Aristotle finds it difficult to determine the proper object of touch and taste and, although he follows the tradition of treating taste as distinct from touch and discusses them separately in *De Anima*, he recommends that we ought to subsume taste as a modality of touch (Sorabji, 1971: 69). When trying to find the proper sensible of touch, Aristotle finds himself unable to group the class of tangible properties into a single genus in *De Anima*, Book II, Chapter 11. Pairing each sense with its proper object, Aristotle claims:

Where the tangible and touch are concerned the same account applies. For if touch is not one perceptual capacity but more than one, then the objects perceptible by touch must also be of more than one sort. But there is a puzzle about whether it is more than one or one, and about what the perceptual organ is of what can perceive by touch, whether it is flesh, and what is analogous to this in other beings, or whether it is not, but instead the flesh is the medium, whereas the primary perceptual organ is something else that is internal. For every perceptual capacity seems to deal with a pair of contraries ... But in the tangible there are many pairs of contraries – hot/cold, dry/moist, hard/soft, and whatever others are of this sort. But there is a sort of resolution at any rate to this puzzle, namely, that with the other perceptual capacities there is more than one pair of contraries – for example, in vocal sound there is not only high and low pitch, but also loudness and softness, smoothness and roughness of voice, and others of this sort. And there are other differentiae (διαφορά) of this sort also where color is concerned. (*De Anima*, 422b17-30)

Due to the shortcomings of Aristotle's proper objects criterion, the philosophy of perception has tried to provide new criteria throughout history. In *De Anima*, if we take flesh to be the organ of touch, then Aristotle does distinguish between two kinds of flesh which could be interpreted as two statuses of the organ of touch – a healthy and an

unhealthy one. Aristotle says that those who have *soft flesh* have a higher and more precise capacity of connection with things and are better endowed with thought. On the contrary, those who are *hard-fleshed* are, within the class of humans, below the soft-fleshed ones, since soft-fleshed humans are more acute and distanced animal forms of touch which are more rudimentary.

Human taste is more exact because it is a sort of touch, and this perceptual capacity is most exact in a human being. For in the others he is inferior to many animals, but in touch he is much more exceedingly exact than the rest. That is why he is also the wisest of the animals. An indication of this is that members of the human race (*genos*) are naturally well-disposed or naturally ill-disposed depending on this perceptual organ and no other, *since the hard-fleshed ones are naturally ill-disposed for thought, whereas the soft-fleshed ones are naturally well-disposed.* (*De Anima*, 421a15–26, my emphasis)

Taking into account the former passage on the kinds of information that touch can provide, and its connection with thought in 421a24-26, it seems unjustified to locate touch as the lowest sense, since it provides a considerable amount of information about the environment. Moreover, this information might be vital for survival: feeling the heat from a fire, sensing the trembling of an earthquake, or even avoiding a spiky poisonous fruit. It is worth noting that in Ancient Greek philosophy there was a tradition that defended the primacy of touch: it is precisely Aristotle who attributes this doctrine to Democritus and his followers in *De Sensu et Sensibilibus* (442a-b). Democritus argued for the priority of touch in the development of the senses so that the other senses are variants of touch. As Aristotle puts it: «They represent all objects of sense as objects of touch, [so] it clearly follows that each of the other senses is a mode of touch» (442a–b). For this reason, Democritus advocated for a theory of perception in which touch served as a model.

Despite Aristotle's rejection and opposition to Democritus' position regarding the primacy of touch, the status of touch as a source of sensory knowledge makes itself evident in Greek etymology, shedding some light on the cognitive value that was already attributed to touch then. Let us resort to the work of the Greek philosopher Seremetakis in 1994. She reassessed the origins of the word *aesthetics* and noted that it comes from two previous terms: *aésthima* (αἴσθημα), which translates as 'emotion-feeling', and

aesthetikí (αεσθητική) or aesthetics. Both of these terms are derivations from *aesthénome* (αεσθένομε), which means «I feel or sense, I understand, grasp, learn» (Seremetakis, 1994: 5). As Paterson notes, the understanding of *aesthénome* (αεσθένομε) as feeling, sensing, grasping establishes a link between sensory experience, affects, and knowledge. This triple interaction is overpassed by the ‘optic’ approach to the senses, which is associated with ‘distance and transcendence’ and can only be accounted for by a ‘haptic’ standpoint, «associated with closeness and proximity» (Paterson, 2007: 84). Therefore, the haptic system which encompasses touch, sight, and movement is already present in the Greek term of *aesthénome* (αεσθένομε). In both *De Anima* and *De Sensu et Sensibilibus*, Aristotle uses the term *haptesthai* (ἅπτεσθαι) to refer to tactile sensations, thus restricting it to the sense of touch, but doesn’t he maintain its connection with thought when he affirms that people with soft flesh are naturally endowed with thought? This short passage links Aristotle with an understanding of *haptesthai* (ἅπτεσθαι) that should not be translated merely as ‘pertaining to the sense of touch’ but rather ‘pertaining to aesthetic experience’, where *aesthetic* is understood, as Seremetakis emphasizes, as sensory feeling, sensing, but also understanding and grasping.

Nevertheless, Aristotelian disputes about the demarcation of the senses among Greek philosophers was shadowed by the rise of Greco-Roman and Alexandrian Christian philosophers from the third century onwards. Neoplatonism became the major philosophical influence that survived and was integrated into Christian thought through syncretism. It was not until the 12th and 13th centuries that Aristotle’s works became available again, translated into Latin from Greek directly or via Arabic sources.⁸ Until then, Plato remained *the* philosopher, and Neoplatonism the major field where philosophical problems – now always connected to Christian theology – continued to be discussed. In particular, the problem of touch and embodiment was connected to Divine Creation and became a moral issue.

⁸ For a historiographic approach to the reception of Aristotelian works in the Middle Ages, see the study by Bydén & Thomsen Thörnqvist (2017).

1.3. Christian Neoplatonic interpretations: Plotinus on bodily beauty and shame

Plotinus, the philosopher of our times, seemed *ashamed of being in the body*. ... «Why really, is it not enough to have to carry the image in which nature has clothed me with? » (Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 1.1– 10, my emphasis)

So far this archaeology of touch has found in Platonic dialogues what could be the seeds of Ocularcentrism in Western thought, and in Aristotle's *De Anima* the desire to taxonomize and demarcate the five senses. The main elements that account for the lineage that goes from Plato to modern Ocularcentrism are the ones I analyzed in *The Republic*, *Theaetetus*, and *Protagoras*: a discontinuity between the visible (and tangible bodies) and the intelligible, the primacy of light and visual metaphors to signify truth, the dismissal of the epistemological value of sensory perception, and damnation of excess in sensual pleasures. In what follows, I will argue that it will be precisely these elements that will be adopted and radicalized by Western religiosity in the syncretic project of Alexandrian Neoplatonism to justify the damnation of flesh. It is the Neoplatonic theological reading of Plato's work that shaped the status and sensible distribution of touch in Middle Ages European societies, until the *sola scriptura*, the return to the original texts promoted in the Reform, provoked a displacement of touch in this sensible distribution.⁹

The damnation of flesh in Greek Christianity goes back to the epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians* letters, written between 50 and 56 C.E., which I will analyze in-depth in the section devoted to the Pauline conception of flesh. In the Pauline Epistles, living by the spirit is praised, whereas living by the flesh is condemned. Thus, in Romans 8:13 the Apostle Paul claims: «For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live» (Romans 8:13). In a similar tone, the Pauline epistle to the Galatian adverts of the sins of the flesh, which are in opposition to and an obstacle for the Spirit:

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have

⁹ For Neoplatonic interpretations of the senses in Plato see Montserrat (1987); Blumenthal (1971); Emilsson (1988); Clark (1996: 277).

also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:17-25)

The Apostle Paul establishes in these passages two paths: that of the flesh, and that of the Spirit. To walk in the spirit, we must abandon flesh, which is connected to the condemnable sins like those of selfishness, jealousy, and fornication. Antithetically, the spirit brings about the virtues of love, joy, peace, and self-control, i.e., measure and temperance. How are these ideas conflated with Platonic principles in Neoplatonic interpretations of the Alexandrian school of Christian theology? The damnation of flesh will be equated with the lower reality and truth of bodily existence established in Plato's simile of the divided line, overemphasizing the value charge of each of the levels of reality and providing a moral reading to the epistemological and ontological hierarchy. Christian Neoplatonism will reach its culmination in the works of Plotinus (Lycopolis, 204 – Campania, 270 a.C.), the *Enneads*, which have arrived at us through the editions of his pupil Porphyry. Although Plotinus developed his doctrine mainly in the Roman Empire, he studied in Alexandria and therefore is an heir of the school of Christian theology developed by Clement of Alexandria and Origen (despite not being a pupil of either of them). In the *Enneads*, Plotinus presents his metaphysics of 'emanation' which hail from Plato's ontology and epistemology as presented in both *The Republic* and *Parmenides*. For us, Plotinus's metaphysics are relevant because of the epistemological value they attribute to touch and embodiment.

In the *Enneads*, Plotinus presents three levels of being, called the three hypostases: the One, the Intellect, and the Soul. As Josep Montserrat points out, Plotinus's three principles «distance themselves from Plato in the transposition of the system from an ontologizing epistemology towards a religious metaphysics that turns Platonic intelligibles into conscious subjects susceptible of being worshiped» (Montserrat, 1987:83). Plotinus restitutes the Platonic First Principle, the One, to its original gnoseological and ontological function, as the very simplicity and self-sufficient principle, like the Platonic One. The knowledge of this First Principle is a non-dual knowledge, which is not exactly knowledge (gnosis, γνώση) or intellect (noesis, νόησις) – it is rather a contemplation (théasthai, θέασθαι) and vision (ideín, ἰδεῖν), knowable only

via a sublime spiritual operation. The second hypostasis is the Intellect, which concerns the being understood as the non-simple, the mixt, and analyzable (Montserrat, 1987:92). In the epistemological order, the second hypostasis distinguishes two elements: the subject and the object, and therefore it enables composition. There is matter, which equals a kind of alterity and otherness, which is informed and defined by the One that gives unity to the indeterminacy of matter. For this reason, the Second Hypostasis depends on the First Principle.

Distancing himself from Clement of Alexandria, who affirmed that the One is unknowable because it pertains to the contents of revelation and not to those of the speculative faculty of intellect (Okafor, 1993:167); Plotinus argues that the One is knowable to different degrees – in a supreme degree by the Intellect, which is defined by the knowledge of the One; and in a lower degree by Nature – the third hypostasis – which contemplates the one in its own way (Montserrat, 1987:100). Finally, the third hypostasis, the Soul, is an ontological and epistemological principle that acts as a mediator between the sensible and the intelligible. Due to its nature as an intelligible substantial unity, it acts as a point of contact between the pure intelligible of the Intellect and sensible reality:

So the first part of soul which is above and is always being filled and illuminated by what is above remains in the intelligible world, while the other part, by means of the first participation in it as participant, goes forth in participation. For life always goes forth from life, since activity reaches everywhere and is not absent from anywhere. Yet as it goes forth, it allow the prior part to remain where it left it; for if it were to abandon its prior part, it would no longer be anywhere but only at the last point which it reached. (*Enneads*, §3.8.5, 10-15 [p.360])

It is in virtue of its mediating character that the Soul is the means for the existent to go back to the superior and revert its fall to the inferior realm. As Montserrat summarizes:

There is the superiority of the Soul and the superiority of the intelligible; there is the participation of the Soul in the intelligible and that of the Nature in the Soul; there is the Soul's life and Nature's life. Thanks to this game of articulations, the relational system of the three levels involved is configured: the Intellect, the superior Soul, and the inferior Soul or Nature. (Montserrat, 1987:102).

Since Soul has a superior and an inferior part, which is connected to Nature, and acts as the mediator between the sensible and the intelligible, the status of embodiment in Plotinus becomes seemingly contradictory in some respects. So far, it

seems that he endows embodiment and the “fallen nature” of human beings as the springboard for knowledge, as a kind of gear that makes reaching the intelligible possible. Moreover, throughout the *Enneads*, Plotinus theorizes bodily beauty, thus endowing embodied existence with an aesthetic value linked with moral virtue.

According to Plotinus, ensouled and informed bodies bring order and life to matter and enable human Souls to turn towards the One, acting as linkages with the divine. It is not embodiment and sensuality in itself that are problematic, the body only becomes problematic when it leads to a distraction from divine contemplation of the One, in a similar way to how sensual pleasures only became problematic for Plato in the *Protagoras* when they became obstacles for future pleasures. The body is valuable not in virtue of its connection with matter, that is, if it was mere matter without neither form nor life, it will be worthless. Embodied existence is valuable because of its double character: it is material, but it is at the same time informed and alive, enabling a connection with the intelligible. The body is always *formed* matter, and it only becomes evil when it reduces itself to mere matter, which is privation and negativity (*Enneads*, §1.8.14. [p.122], §2.4. [p. 164-182], §2.5.4. [p.188], and §3.6.6-§3.6.8 [p. 316-317]). Like for Plato, physical existence is *a means for* attaining knowledge, which belongs to a higher sphere of being. It is this apparently clear-cut distinction that puts both of them on the edge of Dualism (Opsomer, 2001). However, Plotinus claims, all bodies exist with some Beauty. As Anne Dyer Williams argues, the presence of Beauty in bodies is «a vestige of the Good, calling the soul to remember. This presence of the Good occurs because matter is never present without body and bodies are inherently good because they have the gift of form from the intelligible world» (Dyer Williams, 2017:74). For Plotinus, human souls are two-fold as we have seen: they are embodied (the inferior Soul related to Nature), and they transcend bodies (the superior Soul connected to the intelligible). It is the presence of the superior Soul within it that provides a body with Beauty, a reminder, and a connection with the Nous from which the soul emanates. Taking this into account, a denigration of the body would go against the divine Nous and would fail to recognize the traces of the divine in bodily Beauty.

Following this argument, the Gnostic school of Christian Sethians, mainly heirs of the Heretic Valentinus, are criticized by Plotinus because of the way it denigrates embodiment as evil and does not see the beauty in the physical world:

One must not insist on the badness of the sensible cosmos' generated state on account of its having many disagreeable parts ... What other image of the intelligible world could there be that is finer than this one? For what other fire could be a better image of the intelligible Fire apart from the sensible fire? And what other earth apart from sensible earth could come next after the Earth in the intelligible world? And what sphere could be more precise, more dignified, and more well-ordered in its revolution after the one in the intelligible world that contains the intelligible cosmos? And what other sun after the intelligible Sun could be ranked ahead of the visible sun? (*Enneads*, §2.9.4: 20-30 [p.213]).

According to Plato's gnoseological and ontological distinction between the visible and the intelligible realms, Plotinus argues in this passage that visible beauty is an image of the intelligible world – the beauty perceived by sensual perception is an image of the intelligible beauty grasped by the Intellect, a kind of *trace* for the presence of intelligible beauty. According to Dyer Williams:

Gnostic rejection of bodily beauty entails a denial of the only known channel of communication between human and divine. Gnostics taught that they had direct communication from the divine, and this appeal to authority served as the basis for their philosophy of embodiment. Plotinus, following the inductive logic of Plato's *Timaeus*, saw that this philosophy of embodiment contradicted what could be known about the creator from observing the physical world. (Dyer Williams, 2017: 81)

The value attributed by Plotinus to beautiful ensouled and informed bodies, which constitute the primary channel for revealing, remembering, and communicating with the One as the divine source of emanation of all beauty, suggests that bodies are inherently good for Plotinus. However, the account of Plotinus's life by Porphyry suggests a disdain of the body and a general shame in embodiment linked to Christian asceticism (Dodds, 1991) motivated by hatred of the body. In «Beautiful Bodies and Shameful Embodiment in Plotinus's *Enneads*», Dyer Williams addresses this apparent contradiction attributing Plotinus's negative attitudes towards bodies to Porphyry's account of the life of his tutor. In *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry claims:

Plotinus, the philosopher active during our own lifetime, gave the impression of being *embarrassed about having a body*; he certainly could not stand talking about his race, his parents, or his original homeland. He so disliked the idea of being painted or sculpted that when Amelius asked him to allow an image to be made, he

said: 'Isn't it enough that I have to carry around the image that nature has clothed me with?' (Porphyry, §1: 1-10 [p.17], my emphasis)

However, Plotinus's refusal of having a portrait painted and his refusal to talk about his lineage do not necessarily mean that he hates embodied existence. Here, Dyer Williams warns us of the risk of taking Plotinus's claims about his own body out of context, leading to a too simplistic idea that Plotinus hates the body.¹⁰ Instead, Plotinus's dismissing comments on his own body must be taken into perspective. A body can be good or evil, epistemologically valuable or worthless, depending on the circumstances and the way in which it is used:

Is the body used by the soul to reveal unchanging realities, even though the body is itself changing? Then the body in that case is good. Or is the body considered a good in itself and an occasion for the soul's distraction? In this case, the body is an evil. (Dyer Williams, 2017:86)

Again, we find ourselves in front of a problem of measure and context, that is a testimony of the nuances of Plotinus's reasoning, but which was radicalized by certain interpreters – in this case, Porphyry – who shaped the legacy of Neoplatonism into Western thought as the editor of Plotinus's works, setting the basis for the commonplace idea of Neoplatonism as a philosophy which implies a negative attitude towards embodiment, sensuality, and touch. Although it is an erring act to overvalue the body, Plotinus also condemns those philosophers who fail to appreciate the beauty that lies in all embodied existence. As Dyer Williams summarizes it:

The body in itself is good. Its beauty is a testimony to the craftsmanship of its maker, and the way Nature guides it is evidence of the providential care of the Intellect. The placement of souls into bodies can be a good because the soul has the capacity to elevate the body by perfecting its form and giving it life; nevertheless, embodiment is a temporary state for the human soul and to cling to the body is to cling futilely to changeable matter. (Dyer Williams, 2017:86)

In conclusion, Neoplatonic interpretations of touch and embodiment are more nuanced than they may appear superficially. There is a complex fabric of interpretations and filtered readings (Plato – Plotinus – Porphyry) through which a threat can be recovered: in Neoplatonism, there is a tension towards touch,

¹⁰ For the consequences of the Neoplatonic interpretation of touch and embodiment see the analysis of Anne Dyer Williams (2017: 69-86) and Kallistos Ware (1997: 90-111).

embodiment, and sensory perception because sensuality and tactility are part of a 'temporary state' which our existence should not be limited to, but at the same time, we must recognize the traces of the divine in bodily Beauty, which is known via sensory perception. This tension, as I will explore in the next section, is the core dynamo that animates the debates around touch during Early Christianity, captured by John Climacus dictum: the body, my helper, and my enemy.

The many dimensions of touch and the body in Plato and the Neoplatonists – ontological, epistemological, theological, anthropological – are not a fixed conception, they are modulated throughout the dialogues and cannot be easily systematized. However, the distinction between body and soul, and the inferiority of the bodily reality and capacities about the soul and reason are persistent elements. The material organic body means decay and corruption and is assimilated in the *Phaedrus* to prison, arguing that the soul is «buried in this thing we are carrying around now, which we call a body, locked in it like an oyster in its shell» (*Phaedrus*, 250c). Using the euphony of the Greek words, the body (*soma*, σώμα) is a prison (*sema*, σῆμα). In terms of knowledge, in *Timaeus* the lower status of the bodily senses already established in the simile of the discontinuous line is reinforced by claiming that «grasped by opinion, which involves unreasoning sense perception. It comes to be and passes away, but never really is» (*Timaeus*, 27d-28a). It is precisely this core that will prevail throughout Antiquity and into the Greek Fathers of the Christian East, which will face the challenge of accommodating this Hellenic heritage with a Biblical Jewish tradition that conceives the human person as a unity, taking a holistic approach where the individual is not a compound of two parts, body and soul, but rather a whole.

How does this tension between the Jewish and the Platonic traditions shape the value of touch in the development of Christianity? And most importantly, how do the transformations of the value of touch determine the bodily practices and affect the ways of relating to one another that take form in society? Such are the questions that will be explored in the following section.

2. Christianity: touch as a sense of dissent within a religion of incarnation?

2.1. A religion of incarnation

To survey the significance of touch and the body in Christianity from the second century AD to the Late Middle Ages up to the fifteenth century is far from examining a fixed system or tradition. The conception of the bodily and the tactile is central for a religion that is *founded upon the* embodiment, the coming of God to earth in Christ's incarnation or enfleshment. Neither in Western nor in Eastern Christendom was ever a hegemonical universal agreement concerning a doctrine of personhood, and the debates on Incarnation, the Holy Conception, the Eucharist, and Resurrection constituted the battlefield during centuries. It is symptomatic how the outcomes of the seven ecumenical and general councils that took place between 325 and 787 define neither the human body nor human nature. When venturing the archaeological traces of the modern hierarchy of the senses, following the many bifurcations and crossroads of the Christian value of touch becomes an especially titanic challenge. How to account for the many tensions at play during centuries of controversy and disputations?

It is mandatory to avoid a Manichean over-simplified account of the tinges of touch in the development of Christendom. The complexity of its conception lies in the deeply ambivalent value of the body, which must be explored to understand the transformations on the status attributed to touch¹¹. In this section, we aim to trace the ambivalent character of the body in Christianity through a double tension that lies in the heart of it: the incongruity between the Hebraic-Biblical inheritance and the Hellenic-Platonist one; and the confusions and disagreements concerning the doctrine of the Fall.

After presenting how these two tensions affect the interpretation of how an author speaks of the body, I will focus on how such conceptions of the body and touch are connected to and define *bodily practices*. That is, it will be shown how the doctrinal

¹¹ On the value of touch and the body in Early Christian anthropology, see Robinson (1952), Bloom (1967), Gundry (1976). To see the changes concerning the value of touch and the body in Late Medieval Christianity, see Byers (2017: 97-108), Louth, (1997: 111-130), de Lubac (1949). The complex presence of touch has been recently analyzed by Jean-Luc Nancy (2003, 2008). Nancy focuses on the relation between image and logos in the imagery of the untouchable Jesus after resurrection and defends Christianity as a religion of touch.

system of belief shapes the individual's relationship to her own body and others, even beyond religious practice. What is even more, following Mary Douglas¹², it will be argued that there is a correlation between two bodies – the social body and the physical one. Therefore, what is established is a triple interdependence: the epistemological dimension of what we understand as 'body' in doctrinal discussions affects bodily practices of the religious practitioner; at the same time, this configuration of bodily practices in worship is not neutral but corresponds to the articulation of the social body and is therefore political (Douglas, 1973: 93-112).

Our journey will begin with the Greek Fathers of the East, whose efforts were directed to developing an anthropology of the body and the senses that accommodated the Platonic distinction of body and soul and the Jewish holistic approach, but at the same time responded to the doctrine of Resurrection. It is the doctrine that determines the valence of touch and proprioception, which serves as the basis for organizing practices and materially distributing the senses in worship: from asceticism and celibacy to the bodily posture in prayer. The Eastern attention to the body, which reached its summit in the *physical method*, is challenged in the emergence of a distinctive Western Christianity.¹³ It is St. Augustine who challenges Eastern anthropology through a logic of inwardness that contributes to the *fading away* of the body. This doctrinal shift in the Middle Ages causes a set of social changes and liturgical transformations that has been termed *la dérout du corporel*, the rout of the body (Brown, 1989: 441) where the senses and most notably touch were disdained as irrelevant and played no role in worship. As a response to Augustine's logic of inwardness, the Late Middle Ages (XIII – XV Centuries) saw the flourishing of Christian mysticism. Mystics, and especially women, challenged the disembodied tradition in favor of a bodily knowledge that defied ecclesiastical authorities by affirming a continuity between bodily sensations and epiphanic knowledge of God, in contrast with the Augustinian preeminence of world-fleeing and body-fleeing reflection. The story of the body and touch in Christendom is one of vertigo and constant oscillation amidst changing pressures, but its survey provides a privileged insight into the

¹² It is worth mentioning the canonical study by Mary Douglas (1970) on pollution and taboo, as well as Radcliffe-Brown (1939).

¹³ On the social consequences of the value of touch in Medieval Christian worship see Behr (1993) on Christian Asceticism; Peter Brown (1989) for an interdisciplinary account of bodily practices and conceptions of the body in Early Christianity.

traces of the modern configuration of the senses, and it sheds an especially bright light on the interdependence of the epistemological value of the sense of touch and the social configurations a community enacts, which is the underlying concern of our current research.

2.2. Jewish inheritances and *Oneg Shabbat*

In many cases, the ‘embodiment’ of Jewish law stood as a moderating factor that restrained the philosophical temperament’s eagerness to ‘do away’ with the body and flee to the realm of the metaphysical and the divine. (Meyrav, 2017: 111)

Christendom was born in the cradle of two traditions, that of the Hellenic-Platonist heritage, and that of the Hebraic-Biblical one. As their half-caste heir, it undertook the challenge of reconciling two apparently contradictory systems of thought. The result of this syncretism was the rise of a myriad of ambivalences that were the source of philosophical and theological for centuries, from the seven ecumenical and general councils (325-787 AC) to the disputations of the Cathedral school and European universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Embodiment and touch being the central theme within Christian mysteries: that of Incarnation and the Holy Conception, it is reasonable that the place of the body and the value of touch was at the core of such debates. In the precedent section, the Platonic and Neoplatonic conceptions of touch concerning anthropology and eschatology have been presented. This section aims to trace the conception of the body in the early Biblical tradition and to show how it configured the social practices of early Judaism in terms of regulations of proximity and distance between bodies, and proprioception.

Louis Jacobs and Yoav Meyrav¹⁴ have attempted to systematize the development of the conception of the body in early Judaism, in which both agree that Judaism is an *embodied religion* because both in Rabbinic and philosophical debates, the many precepts of the Torah which bind the Jews, named the *mitzvot*, are to be performed through bodily actions (Meyrav, 2017: 87-108; Jacobs, 1997: 71-90). Early Judaism is characterized by a conception of the person as a unity, according to the passages of *Genesis 2:7*, where

¹⁴ Jacobs was a former Professor of Jewish Studies at Lancaster University and founder of the Masorti Judaism in the United Kingdom; and the latter, Yoav Meyrav, is a researcher from the Institute of Jewish Philosophy and Religion and the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies.

man is referred to as *Nefesh Layyah*, a living soul. Any separation of the soul and the body as different entities is ruled out. It is under the influence of Hellenic philosophy, such as Plato's, that the distinction between body and soul is introduced into Judaism. Ever since the Greek-speaking theologians of Alexandria, the idea of a conflict between body and soul is present in Rabbinic literature, which acquires an ambivalent character due to their acknowledgment, at the same time, of the holistic anthropology of the aforementioned Biblical passages. Despite the theoretical emergence of the distinction, the sensual body's valence remains positive and is fully endorsed in worship rituals.

The positive value of embodiment can be traced throughout Medieval Jewish philosophy, from Alexandria to Maimonides. One of the earliest medieval Jewish thinkers, Isaac Israeli (c. 855-955), argued for the perfection of the human body, which he regarded as superior to all other natural bodies (Israeli, 1958: 121-122). According to Israeli, the human body is the most balanced and has the greatest equilibrium among its parts, which is the criterion for the quality of a body. A similar positive assessment of the human body is found in the Cordoban philosopher Abraham ibn Daud (c. 1110-1180), who defends the 'quality' of the human body due to its level of 'parity', i.e., balance. (Ibn Daud, 1986: 113-114; Jacobs, 1997: 82). While ibn Daud argues for the perfection of the human body in material terms, the Andalusian theologian Yoseph ibn Tzaddiq (c.1080-1149) took the argument even beyond in claiming that the human living being was the culmination of perfection of nature and its *end*, providing the defense of the body with a teleologic cause.

It is due to this positive valence of the body within Judaism that the senses are integrated into worship in many rituals – as Jacobs notes the body is highly involved in Jewish worship's rituals such as burial rituals, the priestly blessing, and *Shabbat* (Jacobs, 1997: 77-87). It is worth noting that in these rituals not only the *noble* senses of sight and hearing are involved, but also the allegedly *lower* senses of smell, taste, and touch. Bodily experience is fully implicated in action and acknowledged in the precepts for these rituals. In burial rituals, there is a dynamic of distance and proximity with the body. First, the body needs to be purified in the *taharah* (the rite of purification) because a corpse is considered a source of contamination and a taboo, thus establishing a normative distance to it. However, this taboo status does not entail that the corpse is bereft of the positive

valence of the body, it is not abhorrent. Its taboo status as *untouchable* is attributed to it to «prevent it from being treated in an overfamiliar». The dynamic of distance is reversed after the *taharah* since after the purification the familiars of the defunct can approach the body for the rendering ritual, the *keriah*, where they offer items of clothing. Another symptom of the value of touch in Jewish worship can be found in the priestly blessing, where the positioning of the hands of the priest is a focus of attention throughout the whole ritual, and therefore bodily action and proprioception become central for both the priest and the worshippers.

Finally, the bodily acts of worship are paradigmatic in the *Shabbat* rituals, where the body is engaged in a double way. By negation, touch is the core of the prohibition of work during the *Shabbat*, which forbids, in particular, those «physical actions ... which involve creative manipulation of the material world» (Jacobs, 1997:77). The Mishnah specifies the thirty-nine actions forbidden in *Shabbat* 7:2, which are notably *manual* and involve touch:

The primary labors are forty less one: sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, selecting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, bleaching, hackling, dyeing, spinning, weaving, the making of two loops, weaving two threads, dividing two threads, tying and untying, sewing two stitches, tearing to sew two stitches, capturing a deer, slaughtering, or flaying, or salting it, curing its hide, scraping it, cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing to write two letters, building, tearing down, extinguishing, kindling, striking with a hammer, carrying out from one domain to another. (*Shabbat* 7:2)¹⁵

By affirmation, the body is engaged positively in the *Shabbat* through the Rabbinic idea of the *Oneg Shabbat*, that is, the Shabbat delight, according to which the satisfaction of bodily appetites is regarded as a religious duty in the Shabbat, even to the degree of indulgence. Touch is involved, for example, in the encouragement of marital relationships, but not only. During the ritual worship of the *Havdalah* in the Shabbat, all the senses are articulated and taken into account: the embodied worshipper takes part in a series of bodily actions where proprioception is central in experience. The senses are involved from hearing the words, to tasting the wine, seeing the light, and smelling the spices. This involvement can also be traced in Jewish visual culture, for instance, in the

¹⁵ I use the standard numeration when quoting *Shabbat*, which I retrieve from Dr. Joshua Kulp's English explanation and interpretation (Kulp, 2013).

frontispiece of the Hebrew and Spanish prayerbook *Me'ah Berakhot* published in 1684 in Amsterdam, the implication of the five senses in Jewish worship – *ouuir*, *gustar*, *vista*, *cheiro*, *tacto* – is illustrated (Fig. 6 and 7).



Fig. 6 *Meah Brakhot*, Amsterdam, 1687. Frontispiece page drawing, made of ink, letterpress and engraving. The original print measurements are 13,7 x 8 x 3,3 cm. The image shows a chart divided in five with scenes depicting the five senses: ‘*Ouuir*’ (hearing), a man playing a *shofar*¹⁶ in the temple; ‘*Vista*’ (sight), three people at the benediction of the New Moon; ‘*Gustar*’ (taste), three people sitting outdoors and saying grace after the meal; ‘*Tacto*’ (touch), a couple having their baby circumcised; and ‘*Cheiro*’ (smell), two adults

¹⁶ An ancient Jewish instrument typically made from an animal’s horn and played during prayer. [In this link](#) you can play the sound of the Shofar for a multisensory experience of the frontispiece (Shofar, 2022).

and a child, who is holding the Havdalah candle.¹⁷ Retrieved from [the Center for Jewish Art of the Gross Family Collection](#). Obj. ID: 35331.



Fig. 7 Detail of touch and smell scenes from the frontispiece. Retrieved from [the Center for Jewish Art of the Gross Family Collection](#). Obj. ID: 35331.

Despite this positive assessment of the body that is manifested in the articulation of the senses in religious rituals, the influence of Greek thought through its Arabic interpretation nourished the conception of a conflicting dynamic between body and soul which was not found in early Biblical texts. The emphasis on the struggle instead of on the alliance between these two distinguished entities led to transformations in the sensual configuration of religious rituals and social practices within the Jewish system of beliefs. In particular, it led to the emergence of an asceticism concerning bodily pleasures as mandatory to religious life (Jacobs, 1997: 73). Although there are many (conflicting) opinions concerning asceticism in the Talmudic tradition, there is indeed a tendency to justify the privation of bodily pleasures in virtue of the separation of body and soul. Most defendants of asceticism of Medieval Jewish philosophy argue that embodiment and sensual experience is a weakness of human nature, but it is at the same time an opportunity for the soul to ascend to the religious virtuous life by way of moderating and refusing such bodily pleasures. As Saadia Gaon (882-942) puts it, this moderation can be realized through «the help of the reasoning faculty which God has granted him ... the craving for

¹⁷ A candle is lit during the Havdalah, a ritual that marks the end of the Shabbat and the beginning of a new week in Jewish liturgy. Traditionally, the candle was accompanied by the handling of spices, like cinnamon and clove, that were passed around the family's hands. The correlation between this scene and the sense of smell can be accounted for due to this usage of strongly scented spices.

food [should be used] for the purpose of sustaining the individual organism, and the sex impulse for the maintenance of the human species as a whole.» (Gaon, 1948: 185)

The culmination of the ambivalence between the positive value of the body leading to the religious duty of satisfying its needs, and the imperative of moderation through rationality is found in the thought of Moses Maimonides (1135– 1204). Maimonides argued that the human living being differed from other animals, not necessarily due to its supremacy, but rather because of its need to regulate its instincts through «the application of some art and a lengthy management that cannot be made perfect except through thought and perspicacity, as well as with the help of many tools and many individuals» (Maimonides, 1963: 190). Human beings need rational regulation, not only to live a virtuous religious life as Saadya claimed, but even to survive. In contrast with ibn Daud and Yoseph ibn Tzaddiq’s defense of the perfection of living human beings as the best bodies, Maimonides emphasizes its weakness, which makes it necessary to endow it with a rational capacity for survival. «Paradoxically, human bodily weakness is the key for the fundamental advantage human beings have over all of the other natural creatures» (Meyrav, 2017:119) and enables humankind to move from nature to art. Therefore, the body ceases to be positive in itself as it was in earlier Jewish thinkers, which conceived it as a balanced perfection, and becomes positive only as a *means*: the sensual body is a weakness, but it is necessary as a means to open up the ascend towards rationality. Although Maimonides does not go as far as the Jewish thinker from Zaragoza, Bahya ibn Pakuda (ca. 1050-1210) in his assessment of the weaknesses of the body, who deems the human body as «weak, filthy, and easily incapacitated» (ibn Pakuda, 1996:112), he does share the view of the body as a necessary imperfection to be overcome through rationality. While Saadia and the earlier philosophers conceived the senses and reason to be a whole, Maimonides distinguishes the two faculties and establishes a hierarchy where reason must govern over the senses and appetition, in a Platonist tone. Maimonides and ibn Pakuda’s scale of value which sets an uneven relationship between body and soul, the senses and reason, will have its mirror reflection in the configuration of the senses in worship practices. The inharmonious relationship between body and mind will elevate reason to the privileged way to accessing divine knowledge and communion with God. The soul’s aim will be understood as world-fleeing, and the body becomes, as in Platonism, a prison for it.

The idea of the world-fleeting nature of the rational soul led to the flowering of an ascetic tendency in Jewish worship, which faced the dilemma of accommodating ascetic practices of abstinence with the religious duty of taking care of the body. The main shift was, as mentioned, the displacement of the sensual body as an end in itself with inherent value, to a reduction of the body as a *means to* a rational spiritual ascend. The body has to be taken care of only insofar its neglect would prevent the well-functioning of the soul. However, since Judaism remains an embodied religion, asceticism is not prominent in the Rabbinic tradition, and instances of radical asceticism, abstinence, and celibacy are rare. However, some accounts of ascetic tendencies in early Rabbinic Judaism can be found in Satlow (2003: 207) and Kreisel (1988: 5-22). Even in Maimonides, the care of the body is central, and medicine is endowed with an almost religious status since preserving bodily health is part of worship. As Meyrav puts it:

the life which Maimonides presents the reader is a pleasant one. Enjoyments, relaxation, and economic prosperity are all included within a life dedicated to worship, for the sake of the body, the soul, and life, as long as man's ultimate end remains in view and is actively sought after. (Meyrav, 2017: 134)

On the other hand, asceticism and celibacy persist as *regulative ideals*, to be followed not as a duty, but as a practice of self-improvement, avoiding any kind of distress or harm for the body. Despite the ascetic tendencies stemming from a conception of a conflicting relationship between body and soul influenced by Greek thought, the negative assessment of the body remains marginal. Based on the understanding of embodied human beings as *Nefesh hayyah* (Genesis, 2:7), Jewish precepts presuppose a unity and wholeness that lead to moderating the body but taking care of it and living a pleasant life that satisfies the needs and appetites, tolerating degrees of indulgence for instance in the Shabbat. Therefore, the valence of the body and touch is overall well-considered, and this consideration is manifested in the material involvement of and attention to tactility (and all the senses) in religious practices and actions focusing on care and pleasure.

2.3. The Gospels and the Pauline conception of *flesh*

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (I Corinthians 6:19-20)

When looking into the early theologians of Greek Christianity, one must take into account the changing pressures that modulate their conception of the body, which involve not only philosophical issues but also social variables concerning ecclesiastic authority. As well as trying to reconcile the holistic Hebraic conception of the person as an embodied and physical soul, and the Platonic view in separatist categories where the body must be governed by the soul in a conflicting relationship, Christian doctrine needed to comply with the Scriptures, from which its authority derived. For this reason, the value of the human body and touch, at the core of the founding event of God's incarnation, had to be on a par with the New Testament dictums. But what is the valence of touch in the Scriptures? In what follows we will focus on to symptomatic elements that delineate the complexity of touch in the New Testament: the uses of *touch* in the *Gospels*, and the conception of *flesh* in the Pauline epistles.

Tracing touch in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will shed light on the articulation of contact and distance at play in the narration of Christ's life, which will acquire a normative value in the configuration of the senses in worship. It is worth noting that for evangelists, the coming of Christ is emphatically physical and appeals to the senses: salvation is visible, palpable, embodied. The coming of Christ is the Word becoming flesh and inhabiting our shared world (John 1:14: «And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory»). Even more, the body of Christ is not portrayed as an ideal or image-like body, but rather as a living organic one that suffers from the same necessities and weaknesses as the rest of us. In the scriptures these bodily occurrences are explicitly described: Jesus suffers from hunger (Matthew 21:18: «Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry»), thirst (John 19:28: «After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!"»), and tiredness (John 4:6 Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour). His fleshiness is emphasized by Christ himself after Resurrection, resorting to

touch as a source of certainty and recovery of faith: «Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have» (Luke 24:39). It is also through his physical existence that Jesus performs his miracles and expresses God's will. Christ's authority is not only established by his words but most notably by the manifestation of his holiness in actions that are perceived sensually by humankind. It is telling here to analyze in detail how the concept 'touch' (in Greek translations of the Bible, ἅπτομαι, *haptomai*) is used in the Gospels. In the Gospels, the instances of bodily contact are scarce and constitute events of conversion in different dimensions. The general structure of episodes of tactile miracles is constant: a diseased with some kind of flaw is introduced to Christ, who touches him or her with his hand; virtue «goes out of him» and the wholeness of the one who is touched is restored.

The conversions performed by Christ's touch consist of different levels of care and restitution: from comfort and belief, to healing physical illnesses, to resurrection. These remarkable episodes appear repeatedly in the Gospels and are some of the most striking manifestations of Christ's holy nature. It must be highlighted that Jesus's touch is sacralized through two elements of the action: first, permission needs to be asked before the contact occurs, and second, Jesus is the *agent who touches* with his hands and the disciple is the one who is *passively touched*. Permission prevents the touch of Christ to become an overfamiliar event and modulates the distance from his body, endowing contact with an increased significance. The instances of notable *haptomai* or touch are collected in the Appendix 1: notable instances of touch in the New Testament.

The instances when Jesus actively touches others consist of healing episodes out of 'compassion' (Matthew 20:34) involving people with disabilities, like healing the leprose (Matthew 8:3, Mark 1:20-21, Luke 5:13), healing the blind (Matthew 9:27-30, Matthew 20:34, Mark 8:22-25), healing the deaf (Mark 7:32-35, Luke 22:51). Others are related to illness: healing fever (Matthew 8:15), healing plagues of multitudes who were 'diseased' (Matthew 14:35-36, Mark 3:10, Mark 6:56, Luke 6:19). Thirdly, touch is central in Luke 7:12-14 where Jesus resurrects a man out of compassion for her mother: «[Jesus] came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother». It is worth mentioning two passages where Jesus's touch is

a source of comfort. First, in Matthew 17:5-9, after there is a manifestation of God declaring Jesus as his 'beloved son', Jesus touches the crowd to comfort them so that they are not afraid. Second, in Mark 10:13-14 and Luke 18:15-17, Jesus accepts to touch the children to receive the kingdom of God.

On the other hand, there are two instances in the Gospels where touching Christ is forbidden or reprehended. First, a blameworthy instance of touch because there is a lack of permission. The first one is the incident that occurs when a woman touches Jesus without permission (Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:27-31, Luke 8:44-48). A diseased woman with a blood illness touches Christ's robes and is healed without having asked for permission. This offense is perceived by Christ because he feels virtue going out of him, and he inquires aggressively about who has touched him (according to Mark and Luke). The healed woman admits, and her wrongdoing and is exculpated by Christ. The second one is the prohibition of touching, "touch me not" (in Latin *Noli Me Tangere*, in Greek Μή μου ἅπτου - *mé mou háptou*) by Jesus to Mary Magdalene after his Resurrection. The paradigmatic prohibition on touch "touch me not", which will become a constant in Western Christian visual culture, is directed to Mary Magdalene after she recognizes Christ, who has just been resurrected, in the garden, as narrated in John 20:16-18: «Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father».

After having analyzed the role and value of touch in the Gospels, both as a place of conversion – a source of healing, comfort, and wholeness – and as a sacred event regulated by a complex tension of distance and contact, we will proceed to examine a second Biblical element that affected the configuration of the senses in worship for the Greek Fathers of East Christendom. To understand Paul's understanding of the body in the epistles, mainly in Romans, I Corinthians, and Galatians, I will have recourse to Kallistos Ware, whose works in Eastern Orthodox Church and the early Christian life have shaped our contemporary interpretation of that period. In his influential article «'My helper and my enemy': The body in Greek Christianity» (Ware, 1997), Ware notes that it is necessary to take into account the doctrine of the Fall when approaching an author who speaks about the body. According to it, there would be two kinds of bodies that have a different nature: the *unfallen* and the *fallen*. The unfallen bodies are God's original

creation in the state of Eden, whereas fallen bodies are the ones of our current experience, which is a contranatural state, as a direct consequence of the original sin (Ware, 1997: 90). The ambivalence of Christian attitudes towards the body arises out of a conflict in the core of the fallen state: the body is still good in itself because it is God's creation, but *at the same time*, since the fall it is a locus of sin and temptation, which can become an obstacle for a religiously virtuous life. This inner contradiction is exemplified in the epistles, for instance, if one takes into account the contrast between the highly negative stance in Romans 7: 24 («O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?») and the positive affirmation in I Corinthians 6:19-20 («¹⁹ What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's»).

Having established the distinction between unfallen and fallen bodies, Ware makes a second significant distinction between two pairs of terms that applies specifically to Pauline epistles. In Paul's writings, there is a contrast between flesh (*sarx*) and spirit (*pneuma*), which is neither equivalent nor interchangeable with the contrast between body (*soma*) and soul (*psyche*). Paul's usage of 'flesh' signifies «not the bodily or physical aspect, but total humanity – soul and body together – in so far as it is separated from God and in rebellion against him» (Ware, 1997: 93). Therefore, the Pauline defense of the spirit in front of the flesh does not entail a negation or condemnation of the body by praising a disembodied soul. The holistic conception of personhood of the Old Testament prevails in the Pauline epistles (Robinson, 1952:17-33; Gundry 1976: 29-80) since he does not make a contrasting separation between body and spirit – body and soul remain together. Flesh and Spirit are not two parts or components of the person, but «relationships embracing personhood in its totality» (Ware, 1997: 93). To put it in more contemporary terms, flesh and spirit are two spheres of belonging or modes of existence, encompassing the whole person. How can then Galatians 5:17-25 be interpreted? In this passage, Paul praises the Spirit against the flesh as the righteous way of living, claiming:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness,

revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:17-25)

Living in and *walking in* the spirit is a way of existing rather than a part of the person. To live according to the Spirit means to follow the path of redemption, where the body becomes spiritual; whereas living in flesh means dedicating the whole being to carnal temptations so that mind becomes *fleshy*. In both paths, the person remains whole, a holistic body and soul unity. Despite maintaining the even status of body and soul, the Pauline epistles do condemn carnal acts – adultery, fornication, uncleanness – as sources of corruption but not because the body and sexuality are inherently unclean and sinful, but rather because focusing our attention on such acts prevents the person to reach its potential holiness (Ware, 1997: 93).

2.4. Unresolved tensions in the Christian Greek Fathers

He is my helper and my enemy, my assistant and my opponent, a protector and a traitor (...) I embrace him. And I turn away from him. What is this mystery in me? (Climacus, 1982:185-6)

The complex constellation of influences that articulate the thought of the Greek Church Fathers obscures the attitude towards the body throughout the period that goes from the first to the VIII century of the Christian era. The deep ambivalence towards the value of the body and the senses is a result of a multi-dimensional causal network and the specific valence attributed to physicality and embodied experience by each author depends on the theoretical weight assigned to each element of this network when postulating his interpretation of Christian doctrine. Eastern Christendom was in effect understood by Christian practitioners in multiple differing ways (Brown, 1989:33-64, 140-159), but all these diverse practices were balanced by an ideal of unity shared by the Greek Fathers: «Unity in the human person, unity in the human race» (Chryssavgis, 2016:50)¹⁸. That is, although the Alexandrian tradition is more influenced by Platonist dualism – hence Origen's conception of embodiment as being «dragged down to a lower order» (Origen,

¹⁸ For a deep analysis of the intersections between sexuality, body and ascetism, see Behr (2000).

979: 2.2.2.) – the Greek Fathers tended towards the Hebraic-Biblical holistic understanding of the human person as a unity.

In the Greek Fathers, we find a convergence of bifurcated paths that give rise to a nuanced assessment of the theological and epistemological value of the body. The two ambivalences already pointed out above are the tension between two legacies, the Hellenic-Platonist and the Hebraic-Biblical, and the distinction between unfallen and fallen bodies. In this junction, most Greek Fathers upheld the unitary anthropology postulated in the Old Testament and reacted against Platonist ideas as abstract entities which were deemed ontologically and epistemologically superior to embodied human existence. Due to this resistance to divide personhood into parts or components, Greek Fathers developed an affinity with the Stoic understanding of human beings as unities whose focal point is the heart (Spanneut, 1957: 69-72). Therefore, the holistic standpoint of Hebrew scriptures which, as seen, prevails in the New Testament texts such as Paul's epistles is the regulating ideal of the Greek Father's conception of the sensual body. Despite this consensus on the general unity in the person, the value of the body remained deeply ambivalent, as manifested by John Climacus, the seventh-century Abbot of Sinai, when he expresses his inner hesitancy and fluctuation concerning his body:

He is my helper and my enemy, my assistant and my opponent, a protector and a traitor (...) How can I hate him when my nature disposes me to love him? How can I break away from him when I am bound to him for ever? How can I escape from it when he is going to rise with me? (...) I embrace him. And I turn away from him. What is this mystery in me? (Climacus, 1982:185-6)

The tension of the body as a helper which will «rise with me» in the final Resurrection, and as an enemy which becomes a prison (*soma-sema*) leads to the diversity of conceptions of the body, which locate themselves at different points within the continuum helper-enemy. Therefore, we find two extremist positions that will have consequences on the social organization of bodies, senses, and affects in Christian communities. A priority of the body as a helper can be found in the development of the *physical method* of Byzantine Hesychasts, whereas ascetic writers emphasize the dangerous tempting potential of sensual existence.

a) Hesychasts and the physical method

The Greek Fathers' understanding of the body configured the worship practices and rituals of early Greek Christendom, where physicality performed a key role and the focus on bodily action guided the whole practice. In this sense, we can locate the physical emphasis in worship in the body as helper pole of the continuum we have established. The body actively participates in worship, since the whole person is involved in it, and physicality is conceived as a means to attain the Pauline Spiritual way of life. Kallistos Ware distinguishes two dimensions of bodily participation in worship: in rituals and daily life.

First, the sensual body is engaged in religious rituals through *symbolical actions*, such as facing the East during prayer, marking oneself with the cross, and performing gestures such as bows and prostrations to the ground. High symbolic weight is attributed to such bodily manifestations, and I would argue that the incorporation of these almost choreographic movements entails the introduction of the sense of touch into worship: via a proprioceptive and kinesthetic awareness. Other dimensions of touch, involving haptics, temperature, and humidity perception, are present in central rituals of the Christian East where the *materiality of sacramental signs* is central (Ware, 1997:102). In the sacrament of Baptism, the body is washed in water, and full immersion is encouraged in Eastern Christendom; although the focal sense in Eucharist is that of taste, touch is partly engaged in the physical act of Eucharist eating as well, in which a tactile metamorphosis takes place because, as Ware puts it, «through holy communion our bodies are changed into the members of Christ's body» (Ware, 1997:103).

Finally, in the Eastern service of the *Euchelaion*, i.e., the 'Oil of Prayer', the body is anointed with oil for healing and recovery of wholeness, mirroring how Christ's touch infused virtue into the diseased and astray. Sergey Trostyanskiy traces the transformation from Christ's healing touch to sacramental healing anointment as follows:

Jesus himself (...) did not use oil for healing purposes in his ministry, but his apostles elevated sacred anointing as a major part of their healing ministry, and so it has been used in the Orthodox Church ever since. Holy oil is central to the sacrament of anointing of the sick, as well as being used in association with the exorcism and strengthening ritual of baptismal candidates in the early stages of the rite (Oil of Gladness). The early church's ritual for healing using blessed oil can be seen in the

Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, a work of the early 3rd century. It describes a procedure of blessing oil for the sick during the Eucharistic liturgy. (Trostyanskiy, 2011:33)

This service found its theological justification in the Epistle of James, specifically in James 5:14-15: «Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him». In this context, touch is not a source of corruption but, on the contrary, a means for healing and purification.

Secondly, the living organic body and the sense of touch are involved in the daily spiritual life of the East Christian practitioner through practices of fasting and abstinence. These practices involve the body, albeit by negation. However, abstinence from meat, dairy products, or sexual intercourse does not express a hatred of the body but is rather a way to avoid an overfamiliar and selfish relationship with the satisfaction of needs, so that the practitioner remains aware of and grateful for God's gifts. All the bodily senses are thus part of the practitioner's daily life, and great importance is placed on how they are structured in worship. The physicality of everyday worship in Eastern Christianity reaches its summit in the *physical method* of private prayer developed by Byzantine Hesychasts (Ware, 2000: 89-110). Although the first sources of Hesychasm go back to date back to the fourth and sixth centuries, the formalization of the physical method is to be found in Greek writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: Gregory of Sinai (ca. 1260- 1346), Nicephorus the Hesychast (XIII Century), and Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296 - 1359). In earlier sources, hesychasm was linked to a solitary monastical life, whereas in later sources its meaning focused on a search for inner stillness. According to *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, it denotes "silence of the heart" that is to be attained through bodily techniques rather than by discursive means:

It usually signifies the quest for the union with God through 'apophatic' or 'non-iconic' prayer, that is to say, prayer that is free from images and discursive thinking. From the 5th century onwards, one of the chief means for attaining such Hesychast prayer has been the Invocation of the Holy Name or Jesus Prayer. By the 14th century, if not before, the Jesus Prayer was often accompanied by a psychosomatic technique, involving in particular control of the breathing. (Ware, 2011:299)

The invocation of the Jesus Prayer is performed paying attention to elements that require a high level of proprioception, which demands training the degree of sensitivity towards and awareness of one's own body: mainly bodily posture and regulated breathing. The Hesychast physical method attributes primacy to the body in prayer, endowing touch with a privileged status as the means to attain holiness. Ware finds this primacy explicit in Gregory Palamas's writings, which connect bodily posture to attentiveness in prayer (Ware, 2011: 303). The hesychasts' physical practice is oriented towards «seeking the treasure within the heart», which is considered the focal point of personhood. The exploration of one's own body through breathing and posture is to lead to «the descent of the intellect, along with the breath, into the heart» (Ware, 2011: 304).

In the twenty-seventh step of his *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, John Climacus (ca. 570–ca. 649) provides a late definition of the Hesychast as «one who strives to confine his incorporeal self within the house of the body, paradoxical though this may sound.» (Climacus, 1982: 262) That is, he seeks an awareness – which Climacus calls *nepsis*, wakefulness, and vigilance – of God's presence within oneself, but not through discursive thought, which is cultivated in sacramental life, but rather by «putting away of thoughts» in favor of sensual and bodily strategies; a Hesychast, says Climacus, «requires no words. He is enlightened by deeds rather than by words» (Climacus, 1982: 262). This non-discursive knowledge of the presence of God in Hesychast bodily technique was not defended as a replacement of sacramental life but was rather conceived by writers like Gregory Palamas and Gregory of Sinai as a daily practice that enriched and complemented the active participation of the Church community. Hesychasm presupposes participation in the sacraments such as confession and the Eucharist. «If Hesychast writers do not always speak of this explicitly, it is because they assume it as axiomatic» (Ware, 2011: 305). However, their full embracement of the unity of human beings which led them to value the cultivation of bodily awareness as a means for divine knowledge and communion in no way inferior to dedication to discursive knowledge is a remarkable instance of the tendencies towards an affirmation of touch in Eastern Christianity.

b) Ascetics and the rout of the body

It is worth noting that even ascetic writers, who adhered to an almost radical Platonist dualism, did not attribute a negative valence to the body as such, but rather their praise of ascetism, which is usually translated in sexual continence or even celibacy, is a way to avoid sin and abandon the path of the fallen flesh, against sensual passions which corrupt the body and prevent it from reaching its Spiritual potential. That is, asceticism is a movement towards the Pauline path of the Spirit and a rejection of living in Flesh, not a condemnation of the body as a part of the human person.

There is an increased presence of ascetic movements beginning at the end of the third century AD, giving rise to what Peter Brown termed *le dérout du corporel*, a rout of the body (Brown, 1989: 441). There is a correspondence between an increment of restrictions on the body and moral rigidity which affected the physical body of the worshipper and the simultaneous growth in the rigidity of the social and ecclesiastic body of the Roman Empire. The society which the Greek Fathers inhabited was characterized «by an increasingly rigid hierarchical structure and by an even sharper differentiation of social roles» (Ware, 1997: 95), mainly through the generalization of hereditary serfdom which anchored laborers to a specific territory, thus hindering social mobility. According to Mary Douglas, who postulates a correspondence between the social and the physical body, the emergence of a *strong grid* and a *strong group* in the third-century Roman empire was developed in parallel to a correlative increment on bodily constraint, especially concerning sexuality (Douglas, 1973: 93-112). The social tendency towards moral rigidity and a condemnation of the body was reinforced by a degradation of the body and the sense of touch in Christian doctrine. This was translated into the establishment of celibacy as the ideal, an extreme exaltation of virginity, and a strong contempt over any kind of sexual contact and relationships outside marriage (Ware, 1997: 96; Brown, 1989: 210-338).

The ascetic movements beginning in the third century reached their radical and highest zenith in Syria, where ascetic groups that settled on the mountaintops by the year 370 AD *required* all Christian practitioners to follow strict celibacy, abstain from sexual activity, and condemned marriage. Influenced by Greek debates on the creation of the

perfect household, i.e., *oikonomia*, John Chrysostome praised sexual control and the ideal of the «biddable wife, ‘nailed’ to the safe piety of domestic space, behind the walls of her husband’s courtyard» (Brown, 1989: 312), so that the household would become a small-scale disciplined monastery which mirrored the meticulous restrictions followed by the monks in Syrian mountaintops. Although the positions concerning marriage varied from a positive affirmation of sexuality between married couples in Irenaeus of Lyon (DC 200) to a moderate acceptance of its necessity for race survival despite its fallen nature by Gregory of Nyssa, Althanasius of Nyssa (IV Century AD) and Maximus the Confessor (VII century AD) (Ware, 1997: 97), no Greek Father has an assessment of sexuality as negative as the one defended by ascetics in Syria. Howbeit the limited impact of Syrian radical ascetics in Christendom, the increasing “suspicion of the body”, with an emphasis on women’s bodies, would shape the monastic way of life from the fourth century onwards, and the condemnation of marriage would be manifested in the Catholic Latin East where married men would not be admitted into the priesthood, in contrast with their acceptance in the Greek East (Ware, 1997: 97).

Therefore, the body remains on hold for more than eleven centuries, in tension between the Platonizing conception which diminishes and partly condemns the body, and the Biblical-Hebrew holistic anthropology which understands the person as a unity. In the late Greek Christian writers, such as the Hesychasts of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, what prevails is the Biblical conception of the body as a ‘helper’, as an opportunity for divine knowledge and communion with God rather than as an ‘enemy’. However, the spreading of Christendom beyond the East, moving toward the West, gave rise to a different conception of the body, which would structure the role of the senses in worship for a distinctive branch of Western Catholic tradition within Christianity. This divergence began as early as the fourth century, with the theology of Saint Augustine of Hippo, which would mark a turning point and a paradigm shift with regards to the Christian understanding of the body and touched.¹⁹

¹⁹ On Western Christian anthropology and the body see Nájera (2017: 87-108), Rouselle (1983), and Ware (1967: 17-32). For a broader account of the sociology of the body in Western society see Goffman (1956), Polhemus (1978), and Turner (1997: 15-41).

2.5. Augustine's challenges of virginity and the *appetitus orandi*

For indeed he has in a certain way ascended to the Father in the innermost perceptions of him who has recognized him as equal with the Father; otherwise, he is not rightly touched, that is, otherwise one does not rightly believe in him. (Saint Augustine (1995 [408-420]): 59)

How are we to understand the value of the body and of touch in the changing society of the Middle Ages, which comprises more than a thousand years of history? The strategy that this archaeology will follow will consist in identifying two turning points that guide the development of the unstable value of the body in Western Christian society and worship. At the gates of this period, Saint Augustine is presented as the trailblazer figure for the establishment of a distinctive Western and Latin Tradition. How does his understanding of personhood modify the implication of the senses in worship practices? What effects does his theoretical theological approach have in social configurations? Once this starting point that stakes out the path of Western Catholic Christianity for the centuries to come is examined, the flourishing of bodily female Mysticism in the Late Middle Ages will be argued to be a response to the diminishment of bodily knowledge deriving from Augustinian doctrines.

During the scholastic period of the Middle Ages (1100-1700) until already in Renaissance, the cognitive value of the senses was strongly linked to theology: what was the role of sensory experience in the process of getting to the religious truth delivered by God? In the case of touch, I think it is worth emphasizing how 'being touched' by God's hand had had a religious significance for a long time, a significance that can be traced back to Jewish gematria and the meaning of the number fourteen. In gematria, the number 14 is rendered in alphabetic form as η , yad, which is the Hebrew word for 'hand'. The religious value of the hand in Judaism is passed across to Christianity, as it has been shown in the passages of the New Testament narrating the healing and comforting power of Jesus's touch.

In his influential article «The body in Western Catholic Christianity», Andrew Louth defends that the origin of a Western Catholic Christianity of the Mediterranean was predominantly Greek in its terminology and philosophical influences, especially drawing on Plato's *Timaeus*, since it was «the only one of Plato's dialogues available in Latin

translation, and then only in part, to the Western Middle Ages » (1997:111). From Louth's thesis, we can argue that it was because of the influence of *Timaeus*' anthropology and cosmology, Western Catholic conceptions of personhood would be more Platonizing than the unitary Hebrew tradition that prevailed in the East up until the fourteenth century. The *Timaeus* may have been especially alluring for Western Catholic theologians because they find in it a way to accommodate Platonist tendencies with the Christian notion of the *imago Dei*: the human person is conceived as a *copy, reflection, or image* of God. The *imago Dei* finds its correspondence in the understanding of the living human being in *Timaeus* as a mirror image of the cosmos: the human is *part of* and an encapsulation of the whole cosmos, which is a rational system, in virtue of his possession of a rational soul (Hobson, 2019: 249-250). The Platonic account of the threefold nature of the soul as reason, psychological energy, and desire, and its vindication of the goodness of seeking for the balance of these parts would help Western Catholic theologians to explain the tensions within the body-soul relationship in the fallen condition. According to Louth, at the beginning of Western Catholic Christianity, the influence of the *Timaeus* in these two aspects – the *imago Dei* and the compound nature of the soul – will lead to the configuration of two elements: attention to bodily position in prayer, and the doctrine of the Double creation (Louth, 1997: 113). It was precisely these two elements that Saint Augustine challenged, providing the foundations of and the direction for the development of Catholic Christianity during the Middle Ages.

Firstly, concerning the importance of bodily position in prayer in Western Christianity, I must note that it differs from the bodily technique of Hesychasts in the sense that it is less somatic and more symbolic. What is sought in prayer is not an awareness of the body and the inner presence of holiness by focusing on the heart and breathing, as for the Hesychast, but rather a much more formal significance. Since there is a correspondence between the person and the whole Creation, to find a balance, the body of the worshipper in prayer was to adopt a position with a cosmic significance to correspond to the highest elements of the cosmos. In *Timaeus* 90a, Plato already argued that the vertical upright position of humans was cosmically significant, and this correlation becomes generally accepted in Western Catholicism. The defense of the standing position in prayer can be found in early treatises which establish also the orientation of the body facing East, and the position of the hands as raised. Louth traces

this tradition back to pre-Constantinian period prayed treatises by Origen, Tertullian and Cyprian, although the standing prayer «was given canonical authority by the First Ecumenical Council, held at Nicaea in 325 (canon 20)» (Louth, 1997:113).

Saint Augustine marks a break with the tradition that attributes significance to the bodily position in prayer. According to Augustine, nothing is prescribed for bodily posture in prayer, since the New Testament mentions different ways – standing, sitting, kneeling, lying down – which do not affect prayer on any level, as long as one’s soul desires to pray. Therefore, Augustine shifts the attention in prayer away from a holistic psychosomatic awareness that takes into account physicality, to the primacy of interiority and the soul. The desire to pray, that is, *appetitus orandi*, is the only relevant variable that conditions the practice of prayer. By this shift, the body fades away and becomes irrelevant. A logic of inwardness is imposed and replaces the *imago Dei* conception which endowed the human body with significance in virtue of it being a reflection of the cosmos (Louth, 1997: 117).

Secondly, the compound nature of the soul in *Timaeus* was integrated into the Christian understanding of the person as an account for the nature of the fallen souls, giving rise to the doctrine of *double creation*. According to this doctrine, Creation was a two-step process. In first Creation produced the unfallen state we were purely spiritual bodies in the image of God, contemplating His primal unity in communion. It was in the second Creation that human beings became embodied and sexually differentiated. While the first Creation was characterized by Unity, the second one is marked by a duality, a division between body and soul, and male and female, which is a wound of the original sin (Reuling, 2006: 75-76; Gasparro, 1978: 45-82). This doctrine configured the ideals of early Western Catholic Christian daily life by setting a return to the pre-fallen state before the second Creation as the ideal. The return to an angelic, spiritual state of resurrection gave rise to ideals of abstinence, celibacy, and virginity, as ways to return to the ‘original’ state. This theoretical theological approach shaped social configurations since it determined the relationships with one’s own body and with other bodies. Sensual pleasure driven by the lowest appetite were restricted and acquired a negative valence, sexual contact was seen as a mark of the corruption of the fallen state, even if it occurred within marriage and for child-bearing processes. There is a world-fleeing impulse, in

Weber's terms (Bellah, 1999: 280), in the ascetism derived from the double creation technique, since it values *contact* with the world and physicality as sinful in themselves, as a consequence of our abandoning the path of the Spirit, and as a reminder of the imperfection of the current fallen existence in comparison with the unfallen state (Bellah, 1999: 281).

Therefore, the rejection of the doctrine of the double creation by Saint Augustine not only challenge a theological approach, but also a whole social configuration that was built around a *mythology of virginity* and abstinence. In his interpretation of *Genesis*, Augustine argues that Eve was created to bear Adam's children from the beginning, even in the pre-fallen state they were intended to be a married couple and not a virginal one, since had that been God's will, he would have created a friend. Sexual differentiation is not sinful in itself, what is reprehensible is lust, a sin which does not appear in a second Creation, but the Fall. The double creation is therefore replaced by the doctrine of Creation and Fall. However, Augustine's questioning of the mythology of virginity should be read in all its nuances. In Augustine's account of sexuality, what is defended is not a positive affirmation of sexuality and the contact between sensual body. If the body's moral state is somehow rehabilitated, it is as a way to establish its *neutrality* (Brown, 1989: 387-427). As we saw with the fading away of the body in prayer practices, Augustine advocates for a *transparency* of the body which makes it disappear from the daily life of Catholic Christianity. The body does not have a role in the life project of the Christian person, because he aspires to return to communion with God, and the body has nothing to do with the return of humankind to a union with God. The Redemption is to be carried out by the soul alone (Louth, 1997: 119). Again, the logic of inwardness is imposed, and the body fades away as a transparent body. Fleeing away from the fallen body would enable humankind to return to an original community of souls, but this is to be *achieved by the soul alone*, and not through any practices or regulations involving the body and the senses.

In one of the most paradigmatic instances of scholastic thought, the Augustinian theory of knowledge, the significance of the hand is expressed in a doubling of the sense of touch: touch unfolds as two kinds of touch, that is, literal cutaneous touch and «the right way of touching God» (Augustine, 1995: 59). This second kind of touching is linked

to knowing how to believe in God and getting closer to his truth, in a never-ending process of approximation that is conveyed by the biblical passage of the *Noli me tangere*.²⁰ This getting closer to truth is linked to Augustine's concept of reform: a continuous and repeated desire to know and understand Christ, to touch him to reach the Truth:

«Do not touch me, for I have not yet returned to my Father» was said in such a way . . . [because Jesus wanted to] be touched spiritually on these terms, that he and the Father are one thing. For indeed he has in a certain way ascended to the Father in the innermost perceptions of him who has recognized him as equal with the Father; otherwise, he is not rightly touched, that is, otherwise one does not rightly believe in him. (Augustine, 1995: 59)

In the discussion of *Noli me tangere*, two central notions for touch come into play: distance and proximity. While St Augustine's writings shaped Western Christianity and the Latin Church dynamics of distance and self-communion, a usually conflicting trend was blossoming amidst the rout of the body (*la dérout du corporel*, Brown, 1989: 441) in the Late Middle Ages: the visceral and radically embodied experience of religion materialized in Women Mysticism.

2.6. A bloody response: Women Mysticism in the Late Middle Ages

Quiérome declarar más, porque estas cosas de oración todas son dificultosas y, si no se halla maestro, muy malas de entender; y esto hace que, aunque quisiera abreviar y bastaba para el entendimiento bueno de quien me mandó escribir estas cosas de oración sólo tocarlas, mi torpeza no da lugar a decir y dar a entender en pocas palabras cosa que tanto importa declararla bien; que como yo pasé tanto, he lástima a los que comienzan con solos libros, que es cosa extraña cuán diferentemente se entiende de lo que después de experimentado se ve. (De Ávila, 2021: XIII, §12)

Saint Augustine's logic of inwardness and his stress on *appetitus orandi* minimized the physicality of worship in Western Catholic Tradition. Although the sacredness of space prevailed in religious architecture, for instance in the orientation of churches and the staging of rituals in an altar, Augustine's understanding of inwardness affected the value of the human body, and most importantly of Christ's body. While for the Greek Fathers the body of Christ is a sacred space *in which* redemption is effected, from the XII Century onwards the bodily suffering of Christ is merely a manifestation *through which* his inward love is expressed, it is precisely in this interior love that redemption occurs (Louth, 1997:

²⁰ See Benay & Rafanelli (2015) for an investigation of the Impact of the *Noli me tangere* passage in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Art.

121). Bodily physicality is merely a signal for the grace of Christ, which is its divine reality. The interest in the body can be found in the theological questions discussed in new universities and Cathedral Schools of the XII Century: from the resurrection, Christology, and the Holy Conception, to miracles, embryology, and ascetic practices.

With regards to worship, this shift of attention towards inwardness produced a transformation of the main ritual of Catholic Christianity, the mystery of the Eucharist, which ceases to be an embodied action involving the five senses – as the great authority in social aspects of the Catholic dogma, Henri de Lubac emphasizes, «*un mystère, au sens ancien du mot, est plutôt une action qu'une chose*» (De Lubac, 1949: 60). From the XII century onwards, as Louth puts it, «the Eucharist shrinks from a sacred action, taking place in space and time, involving movement – to a consecrated host, occupying a relatively small volume of space» (Louth, 1997: 124). This shift affects the social configuration of the Catholic Church, endowing priestly ministry with a greater hierarchical power since the center of the Eucharist was no longer the social body of the Church, its community, but rather the consecrated host over whose miracle of transubstantiation only priesthood had authority (De Certeau, 1982).

The devaluation of the body and of the sensual aspects of worship, which was intimately coupled with the greatly increased priestly authority, collided with the emergence of the physical phenomena of mysticism. The proliferation of mystics who claimed authority in virtue of physical phenomena of contact with the divine in front of the papacy and sacerdotal authority became a threat to the formal hierarchy. The sharp *tension* between sacerdotal authority and mysticism found its radical collision with those mystics who claimed their right over the formal Church. Whereas in the Eastern Church the focus on the body and physical touch vindicated by the Hesychasts was *in accordance with* the official worship and was conceived as *complementary*, mysticism in the Middle Ages was a *defiance to* and *in tension with* the formal Catholic Church, which was becoming more and more rigid in its configuration as a structure of power and authority. It is worth noting that Medieval mysticism emerges mainly within female spirituality.²¹ The solidification of power structures and hierarchical authority, which was assumed

²¹ On the connections between feminist power, the critique of masculinity and medieval women mystics see King, 1993: 98-110.

primarily by men occurred in parallel with a migration of knowledge from monasteries to universities. The network of monasteries included women monasteries, making possible the emergence of traditionally educated women like Hildegard of Bingen, whereas only men had access to the new education system of universities, thus relegating women to an even more marginal position (Louth, 1997: 126). Therefore, the significance of mysticism is not confined to a doctrinal controversy. Female mysticism in the Middle Ages was a strategy for women to access power in a society where they were banned from the official university spaces of knowledge, through the vindication of the epistemological value and access to the divine in the realms where they did have control: the body and food. The body as a means of communication and oneness with Christ and the divine defied the monopoly of power of sacerdotal authority. Their assimilation to Christ through *stigmata* (replicas of Christ's wounds on the Cross, which in some cases bleed) recovered the conception of Christ's embodiment manifested in the Gospels: a suffering, hungry and thirsty, exhausted, and vulnerable body (Giunta, 2012: 250-294).

The physicality of female spirituality in the Late Middle Ages is explored in deep detail by the great authority on Medieval mysticism Carole Walker Bynum in *Fragmentation and Redemption. Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*.²² Bynum stresses the marginal character of female piety arguing that 'women' as social agents were outside the medieval notions of social structure, and that female images like the mother, the bride, and the virgin were used by males to signify an escape or evasion from the social. From this state of radical apartness, female mystics from the XII to the XV century adopted the strategy of the *imitatio Christi* as a manifestation of their struggle (Bynum, 1991: 27-52). For men, women symbolized a world-fleeing existence *outside* the social through a separated interiority and intimacy. However, if we shift our attention from men writing about women to the first-hand experiences of female mystics in their writings, it can be appreciated how they did not conceive themselves as «weak vessels», but rather as criticizing male power and putting forward an alternative to it. Finke emphasizes how, when studying their writings, mystic women's bodies become a field of struggle, a *site for discursive dissent* which challenges «our usual stereotypes

²² For a deep analysis of the value of the body in women religious practices, with a focus on Mysticism and Resurrection I would refer to the different studies by Bynum (1984, 1991, 1995), as well as Bell's *Holy Anorexia* (1985) and Gross' anthology *Beyond Androcentrism* (1977).

of women in the Middle Ages as either the subject of a clerical misogyny that saw woman as the incarnation of every evil, on the one hand, or as the docile and virginal saint and martyr on the other» (Finke, 1993: 31). This is palpable in Teresa de Ávila's autobiography, where her bodily communication with God is in a constant oscillation between an undeniable revealed truth and an evil deception, which she experiences as a hesitancy reinforced by the non-discursive nature of her prayer:

This is the method of prayer I then used: since I could not reflect discursively with the intellect, I strove to represent Christ within me, and it did me greater good—in my opinion—to represent Him in those scenes where I saw Him more alone. It seemed to me that being alone and afflicted, as a person in need, He had to accept me. I had many simple thoughts like these. The scene of His prayer in the garden, especially, was a comfort to me; I strove to be His companion there. If I could, I thought of the sweat and agony He had undergone in that place. I desired to wipe away the sweat He so painfully experienced, but I recall that I never dared to actually do it, since my sins appeared to me so serious. I remained with Him as long as my thoughts allowed me to, for there were many distractions that tormented me ... But to return to what I was saying about the torment my distracting thoughts gave me, this torment is a characteristic of the method in which you proceed without discursive reflection on the part of the intellect. For such a method requires that the soul be very advanced, or lost; I mean lost with regard to discursive reflection. In its progress it advances a great deal because it advances in love. (Avila, 2008: 49-50)

If we focus back on the phenomena of *stigmata* as a paradigmatic instance of bodily and tactile religiosity, the diversity among their instances provides a good example of how mystic religiosity was oscillating, dynamic and elusive. Its particularity and variations made it fugitive from any static definition, and therefore its prosecution and control by clerical authority was also difficult. For instance, in the case of *stigmata*, some of them were self-inflicted to trigger the ecstasies, like in the case of the English mystic Margery Kempe (1373-1438),²³ who scarified her own hands with the *stigmata* in a moment of suffering to call Christ to revelation (McAvoy, 2004: 38). In the case of Catherine of Siena, the *stigmata* were invisible, and were evidenced only in a public display of ecstasy where Catherine de Siena fell on her knees and screamed in pain as she was wounded and claimed: «Father, I must tell you that, by his mercy, I now bear the *stigmata* of the lord Jesus in my body ... I saw, springing from the marks of his most sacred wounds, five blood-red rays coming down upon me, directed towards my hands and feet and heart» (Capua, 1980: 186). The bodily manifestation of the ecstasy, even

²³ A body-focused analysis of Kempe's religiosity can be found in Renevev (2002).

without visual proof of the wounds, was the medium through which mystic women communicated their revelations and established their authority. A prove of this is that the invisibility of de Siena's *stigmata* does not hinder their veracity.²⁴ Klaniczay connects the authority of Catherine de Siena's invisible stigmata with the truthfulness attributed to Teresa de Ávila's transverberation (2020: 168), i.e. a mystic experience of connection with God through a feeling of having one's heart crossed by a supernatural fire. In the case of de Ávila, there was no physical evidence of a holy arrow wounding her heart, but she nevertheless writes about the physical nature of the receiving the godly fire:

This time, though, the Lord desired that I see the vision in the following way ... I saw in his hands a large golden dart and at the end of the iron tip there appeared to be a little fire. It seemed to me this angel plunged the dart several times into my heart and that it reached deep within me. When he drew it out, I thought he was carrying off with him the deepest part of me; and he left me all on fire with great love of God. The pain was so great that it made me moan, and the sweetness this greatest pain caused me was so superabundant that there is no desire capable of taking it away; nor is the soul content with less than God. The pain is not bodily but spiritual, *although the body doesn't fail to share in some of it, and even a great deal.* (Avila, 2008: 200, my emphasis)

These mystic experiences of Medieval religious women were part of a wider charismatic appeal which situated them in a position of leadership *outside* of the ecclesiastical political structure that wanted to govern the sensing, affects and passions of the population. Such leadership would become a source of dissent and, finally, a motive for prosecution. The public character of mystic ecstasies and visions is notable throughout its testimonies. This strengthens the argument of how female mystics did not dwell in retired life, but on the contrary, conjugated their ecstatic and ascetic mystic practices with an active engagement in the different social spheres in which they were embedded through service in the world involving practices of care and charity.²⁵ Mystic women tended to be charismatic leaders with a considerable group of followers, a condition which prompted a dynamic of negotiations with clerical authorities, who were initially open to

²⁴ The veracity of the invisible stigmata cause, however, a big debate, and finally they concluded with the establishment of visual proof. As Klaniczay narrates, «the corporeal relics of Catherine of Siena also came to support the veracity of her stigmata; from the sixteenth century, the stigmata, unseen in her lifetime, could be indeed perceived on her mummified hand and feet-relics» (Klaniczay, 2020: 167).

²⁵ A landmark on the shift from a male gaze-oriented hagiography into studying religious women as subjects is the volume *Maps of Flesh and Light: the Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, edited by prof. Ulrike Wiethaus (1993). In the analysis of the lives of Late Middle Ages mystics, I will draw on the contributions of Jo Ann McNamara (1993) and Laurie Finke (1993) in this volume.

tolerate female mystics. It was not until orthodoxy became more restrictive that religious authority started to prosecute mysticism.

For our purposes, the proliferation of mysticism is significant because the practices and phenomena involved in medieval female mysticism are markedly bodily and reintroduce the five senses to worship. From taste in extreme ascetic fasting (Bell, 1985), to the experience of pain and wet blood in instances of *stigmata*, which involve dimensions of touch, women's mysticism vindicated the affective, appetitive, sensory pole of divine knowledge in front of the normative discourse defended by sacerdotal authority. In the XIV century, precisely in virtue of its defying character, female mysticism would be criticized and even persecuted by the papacy, leading to a condemnation of charitable activity that put at risk the subsistence of mystic women. There was an eagerness to control the proliferation of women's physical piety and, as Bynum explains, «women's forms of religious life were pressured into monasticized arrangements, not all women wanted» (Bynum, 1991: 77). Many women rejected the official Church communities where they would have been forced to abide by the Papal authority and opted for alternative female religious communities such as the *béguinages*, where there was an absence of vows (Bynum, 1984: 83-109).

Another instance of male attempts to control female mysticism can be found in the narration of their lives. Female mysticism did not only challenge the sacerdotal authority over knowledge by their bodily religious practices, vindicating the five senses that had faded away due to the prevalence of Augustine's logic of inwardness; in women's writings, there is a provocation to the traditional notion of discursiveness adopted by male writers who narrated lives as social dramas structured by turning points. As Bynum points out, in women's writings such structure is subverted, since «the themes are less climax, conversion, reintegration and triumph, the liminality of reversal or elevation, than continuity» (Bynum, 1991: 32).

For our purposes, the vindication of the epistemological value of tactile sensations and embodied experience, which leads to a questioning of the discursive structures which monopolize knowledge in male-dominated environments such as the sacerdotal hierarchy and universities, is significant because it elevates touch to a means for access to the divine.

Therefore, female mysticism constitutes an attempt to establish an alternative kind of knowledge that broadens epistemology by introducing the significance of the somatic. Paradoxically, control, discipline, and torture of the body led to an emphasis on the body which rehabilitated the Hebrew holistic conception of personhood obscured by Augustine's stress on interiority. Figures such as Teresa of Ávila, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, Hadewijch, Juliana of Cornillon, Christina of Markyate, and the Franciscan tertiaries Angela of Foligno and Margaret of Cortona mark a turning point in the conception of the body and touch in Western Catholic Christianity. Their pious practice gives rise to socioreligious types where bodily processes become the focal point. Obscuring the boundary between body and soul, female mystics reintroduced flesh, touch, and the body to knowledge through the perspective of oneness with the divine. To this extent, the testimony of their marginality and prosecution is a reminder of how their attempt to broaden the focus on epistemology was already recognized as a menace for social structure and the distribution of the senses, bodies, and affects in a socio-political context controlled by the sacerdotal male monopoly of power.

3. Protestantism: modern science and the disembodied *esprit de corps*

3.1. A radical doctrine of the Fall as an epistemic reorganization of the senses

The character of public life and civil society over any length of time depends critically on what people believe, what they desire, what they care about, and how they act. (Gregory, 2016: 159)

So far, we have argued that it was a theological basis that configured the hierarchy of the epistemological value of the senses during the Middle Ages. It must be taken into account that the epistemological focus and the final authority for knowledge was the clergy, who controlled first the monasteries and then the first European universities. It was these centers of knowledge that formed the future leaders of the Church, who were, in turn, the ministers that ruled over the senses and affections of people. We must not underestimate the effects of Christian epistemologies on the flesh of worshippers. The religious precepts and rituals impregnated not only the sacred space of the church but also the centers of education and the domestic space, dictating how to touch, caress, eat, dance. Responses against the hierarchical structure of the clergy did indeed manifest themselves *in the flesh* of female mystics of the Late Middle Ages. The 16th-century witnesses a theological

upheaval that would transform the ordering of the senses and, I will argue, already set the basis for the sensual configuration of modernity: the Reformation. Three major theological changes that determine the distribution of the senses, especially of touch, will be analyzed: first, the rise of modern sciences notably influenced by a new theology of the original sin; second, the transformation of curricula and pedagogical methods of Protestant Universities; and third, the radical critique of idolatry in Catholic rituals. Finally, we will show how the birth of museums is closer to a sacred space configured through a Protestant paradigm – vision-centric, silence, prohibition of touch – than to the cabinets of curiosities of the Renaissance.

The Reformation is a moment that affects many spheres of existence: theology, science, politics, philosophy, culture. Since we will focus on the emergent changes at the outbreak of the Reformation, attention needs to be paid to *cultural hybridations* and synthetic constructions of spirituality and knowledge during the Reformation (Burke, 2009: 1-10), since the sixteenth century constitutes a moment of confluence of a myriad of religious and intellectual movements that can only be understood if we take a holistic approach. It will be argued that the triadic dynamic between theology, knowledge, and the senses that is set already in the Reformation will be the seed of the distribution of the senses that prevails throughout Modernity. However, it is worth noting that the Reformation and Modernity cannot be used as equivalent terms. As Brad S. Gregory examines in depth in *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Gregory, 2012), the dualist conception of the Reformation as discontinuous from the Middle Ages and continuous with modern rationality and autonomy has been highly contested. However, Gregory argues that «the commitment to the principle of *sola scriptura* unintentionally sowed the seeds for the individualization and privatization of ‘religion’, within modern liberal states» (Gregory, 2016: 143). Gregory alerts of how the emergence of modern liberal political institutions can only be understood tied to the religious-political conflicts of the Reformation, but that this stepping-stone for modernity must be conceived as set in motion, as «ongoing complex processes in which the distant past can and does continue to influence the present» (Gregory, 2016: 144).

Many features of the Reformation do not depart greatly from tendencies already present in the Late Middle Ages, signaling how the clear-cut discontinuity between the Middle Ages and the Reformation is questionable. The tendency that argues for the continuity between a Catholic medieval society and the Reformation is what Gregory calls «the revisionist-confessionalization narrative» (Gregory, 2016: 146). The historical evidence provided by this narrative are:

the widespread evidence indicative of lay enthusiasm for the practice of Catholicism in the decades before 1517, the embrace of reform-minded humanism by numerous scholastic theologians and church leaders before the Reformation, the extent of late medieval lay Bible reading, and the number of vernacular printed Bibles except for in England, the vitality of late-medieval intellectual life, the extent to which scholastic thinkers had already accommodated the prohibition of usury in the midst of thriving markets in the cities of northern and central Italy, southwestern Germany, and Flanders in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and the extent to which secular authorities were already exercising control over late medieval church institutions in cities and territories under their jurisdiction. (Gregory, 2016: 146)

However, the Reformation is considered, half a millennium later, as the seed of «Modern Western freedom, autonomy, and the self-determination of individuals in rational, scientific, liberal-democratic states» (Gregory, 2016: 144). This tendency to connect the Reformation to modernity is what Gregory denominates «the liberal progressive-narrative». As argued by Ernst Troeltsch in 1912 in *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World*, Max Weber's 1905 essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, the Protestant Reformation contributed to the “disenchantment of the world” by replacing the magic of the medieval church with the uniform causality of modern natural sciences (Troeltsch, 1999; Thomas, 1971; Weber, 2002). The emphasis on *sola scriptura* enabled a reduction of the medieval Church's political power, setting the basis for the separation of church and state. Subsequently, the focus on the evangelical imperative of the gospel paved the way to the Christian missions by imperial modern states that set out to spread Western civilization and progress to Africa, America, and Asia, mainly. Therefore, the consequences of the Reformation that affect modernity are not so much theological or moral, but rather institutional and embodied: religious and political powers would focus on catechizing and discipline subjects, «who were more obedient than their medieval forebears had been» (Gregory,

2016: 147), through a bureaucratized installation of social discipline and catechesis. In what follows, these nexuses between Reformation and modern ideas will be examined to show how they laid the foundations of knowledge institutions and patterns of embodied behavior and sensing. What are the unintended and unanticipated effects of the principles of the Reformation on different dimensions of human existence? How did they shape our relationship with humans and non-human others? How did the echoes of this distant past configure the sacred space of the great European museum institutions in the eighteenth century?

3.2. A culture of dissection: the birth of Ocularcentric Modern sciences

The Reformation constituted an upheaval for Western society, which challenged the traditional authorities, mainly embodied by the Catholic clergy and by Aristotelian philosophy at that time, and opened up new modes of knowledge that fully developed throughout the establishment of modern sciences. The question of how the Protestant Reformation affected the rise of modern sciences, especially natural sciences, has been discussed at length by Dillenberger (1960), then Merton (1970), and most recently Harrison (1998, 2007, 2016). Across this lineage of historians, there seems to be an agreement on one aspect: the question that should be asked is not *whether* the Reformation and modern science influenced each other, but rather *how* this relationship is articulated. Peter Harrison, who has developed the intersections between the Protestant Reformation and the birth of modern science and epistemology at length, proposes different *possible* modes of influence between the two, which can be synthesized as follows. Protestantism could have influenced the doctrines, practices, attitudes, and a particular ethic of modern sciences. Moreover, it could have instituted presuppositions that were less of an obstacle, and that even fostered the development of modern science. Because of this influence, Harrison argues that the Protestant Reformation and its challenge to catholic authorities was a crucial ingredient for the birth of the new epistemological institutions of modern science (Harrison, 2016).

Both the Protestant Reformation and the birth of modern science are complex phenomena that we must avoid oversimplifying and, for this reason, the influences traced will be qualified in detail. In what follows, I will try to elucidate how the process of the

Reformation animates the nuanced trajectories of power and knowledge, of the epistemological value of the senses, and the social distribution of bodies. This will be relevant insofar they will shape modern institutions of knowledge, one of them being the museum in the XVIII century.

I will argue that there is an entangled genealogy of Protestant ethics that shapes the social epistemology of modern sciences, which articulates a variety of institutions and apparatuses, that function as constructions of knowledge. In tandem, Protestant ethics and Modern scientific institutions built a value theory where touch was concealed and even persecuted, a theory which was materialized in institutions where divergent bodies and epistemologies were oppressed by an Ocularcentrism and a compulsory able-bodiedness. Many of these consequences may as well have been unintended, as argued historically by Troeltsch (1999) and more recently by Gregory (2012). These oppressive institutions and apparatuses, in turn, shape the relationship of individuals with each other and with non-human others, mainly by configuring a specific functioning of the senses. First, it will be shown how the Protestant response against Aristotelian philosophy, which is based on a radical interpretation of the doctrine of the Fall, shapes the *ethos* of modern science. Second, I will focus particularly on how this epistemological shift affects the role of the senses – and touch – in achieving knowledge, arguing that the diminishment of the senses and lived experience advocated by Protestants correlates to an anatomically fragmented approach to the body and its systems as an object.

Since the twelfth century, knowledge had slowly been displaced from monasteries to Cathedral schools and universities, where Scholastic philosophy had received Aristotle's philosophy and had established a canon of higher education to train new religious and political leaders. Epistemological authority was concentrated on these institutions, extremely hierarchical and always dependent on the Papacy. The Protestant Reformation challenged that authority by appealing to two principles: the Humanist call *ad fontes* (to the sources), which called for the study and analysis of classic Greek and Roman texts; and the Lutheran motto *sola scriptura* (by scripture alone), which established the Bible as the only source of authority. Therefore, from the sixteenth century onwards, the Protestant Reformation conceived its questioning of the ecclesiastical epistemological authority not as a novelty, but as the originality of returning to the origin.

It is in this context that, partly to avoid the suspicion of novelty, new sciences paralleled the religious Reformation by claiming their legitimacy as revivals of original pure forms of knowledge. As Harrison points out, Copernicanism was linked to ancient Pythagorism, atomism was presented as a revival of Democritus and Epicurean's theories, and Isaac Newton tried to argue that his natural philosophy accommodated ancient Greek and Egyptian teachings by the sages. Most notably, scientific novelty was even argued to have been defended by the Hebrew Bible authors, thus giving rise to a kind of Mosaic science (Harrison, 2016: 102-103). Grounding scientific knowledge in biblical sources, Renaissance thinkers spoke of a «natural philosophy reformed by divine light» (Comenius, 1651) or Christian Physics (Daneau, 1576).

Therefore, there is a shared tendency between modern sciences and the Protestant Reformation manifested in the striving to return to an original pure mode of knowledge. These two novel movements reinforced each other, but it was the Protestant Reformation that had the upper hand and constituted a source of social legitimacy for new scientific institutions, methods, and doctrines. This affinity is animated by a common goal: to liberate both religious and scientific knowledge from the hindrance of Aristotelian philosophy, which both Protestants and Renaissance scientists saw as pagan corruption. In the Protestant criticism of Aristotle's effects on Christian theology, scientific reformers found an opportunity to discredit his epistemological authority in science. It is in this junction that Francis Bacon's scientific method emerges, majorly animated, as we shall see, by a radical interpretation of the doctrine of the Fall exposed in Francis Bacon's essay «The Advancement of Learning» (Bacon, 1857a: 300). The Protestant doctrine of the Fall argued that the original sin affected our sensory and cognitive capacities, leading to a "total depravity", since "the whole soul is vitiated" in Calvin's commentaries on the Book of Ezekiel Ch. XI:19, 20 (Calvin, 2003: 375).

I will follow Peter Harrison (2016) in his argumentation of how Protestant reformers argued against Aristotelian science by appealing to the biblical doctrine of the Fall. Protestant reformers were reluctant to accept Aristotelian philosophy as the basis of university's curricula, which were the institutions in charge of forming future generations of the clergy because they considered that Scholastics had not been attentive enough to the ways in which the philosopher's teachings were inconsistent with Christian doctrines.

In particular, theological reformers argued that Aristotle had ignored the Christian doctrine of the Creation and Fall, and especially the epistemological consequences of the fallen nature of humankind. Protestants argued that medieval philosophers had accepted Aristotelian science without noticing that it was based on a presupposition inconsistent with the fallen state of humans: «a confidence in the unaided powers of human reasoning and his conviction that inherent rationality was the natural condition of human beings» and «the uncritical assumption that the senses delivered a relatively accurate picture of the world, and that the workings of nature itself were largely transparent to the human gaze»; the Fall «damaged not only human moral capacities but sensory and cognitive abilities as well» (Harrison 2016: 105). Luther himself claimed in his *Sermon on Epiphany*: «it is impossible that nature could be understood by human reason after the fall of Adam» (Luther, 1997a: 320), and attacked the presupposition that «natural light or intellect and heathen philosophy are also safe means of discovering the truth» (Luther, 1997a: 332).

For the current research's purposes, the Protestant vindication of a radical doctrine of the Fall is relevant because it casts a shadow of suspicion over the senses. Since the senses (and the body) have been inexorably damaged by the fall, the knowledge they can provide is necessarily unreliable and must remain stained by its status as “fallen knowledge”, in contrast with an Adamic pre-fallen knowledge which will become the ideal of pure knowledge of nature and its operations. As a consequence of the unreliability of the senses, Aristotelian practices of commonsense observation of the world will be discredited, since when the senses, and even reason, function naturally they distort the *real* world. In contrast, scientific knowledge was to be acquired through experiments and with the aid of mechanical instruments. Therefore, the doctrine of the Fall had strong consequences for the methods and content of scientific knowledge. After having presented this relationship between the doctrine of the Fall and the epistemological value of the senses, it can be examined how the ideal of Adamic knowledge and the damnation of the fallen state configures the methodology of modern science as established in Francis Bacon's 1621 treatise, *Novum Organum* (Bacon, 1960).

Two goals will animate Bacon's scientific method: first, the restoration of the encyclopedic knowledge once possessed in a pre-fallen state; and second, also influences

by the Genesis texts, the restoration of human *mastery and dominion* over the natural world. As Bacon puts it: «man by the fall fell at the same time from his state of innocence [sic] and his dominion over creation ... Both of these losses can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by arts and sciences» (Bacon, 1857b: 247-48; 1857b: 27). Therefore, while religion is in charge of restoring the moral innocence of humankind, arts, and science must focus on leading to *dominion* over nature. The rhetoric of the dominion, which will inform knowledge institutions as structures of power-knowledge, will be explicit in the rising years of modernity, where the conjunction of theological and scientific goals is manifest. As Thomas Sprat points out, early members of the Royal Society of London, founded in 1660, argued that modern science was to restore the state of human dominion over nature, an original lost situation where the purpose of nature and Creation was to provide for human needs, a standpoint legitimized by biblical narrations of the Creation: «What greater *privilege* have men to boast of than this? that they have the pow'r [sic] of using, directing, changing, or advancing all the rest of the Creatures? This is the *Dominion* which *God* has given us over the *Works* of his hands» (Sprat, 1667: 395-6).

The restoration of the dominion over knowledge cannot be performed by the fallen and damaged cognitive capacities of earthly human beings. For this reason, commonsense observation is substituted in Bacon's method by a series of experiments that can be repeated, which control a specific set of variables by reference to a set of circumstances that can be established and modified by the scientist. These variables are usually quantifiable and measured with the aid of instruments and apparatuses – thus reducing as much as possible the role of the natural senses, which are seen as 'corruptive' for the method. To acquire real knowledge, nature must be forced under conditions of systematic observation, since the natural human sense is incapable of accessing the functioning of nature without this mediation. What is more, as Harrison highlights, «fallen human senses stood in need of artificial augmentation – most notably with the telescope and microscope – in order to reveal dimensions of the natural world that Adam would have naturally been acquainted with» (Harrison 2016: 107). I must note that as a consequence, modern science became an Ocularcentric enterprise, since the scientist was conceived as a disembodied and neutral observant who had to register the measurements of the experiment, an activity where allegedly only his eyes were implicated. The two main instrumental breakthroughs

– the telescope and the microscope – are also *scopic* devices, that is, vision-centered. Robert Hooke, a pioneer in microscopy who coined the term ‘cell’ in his work *Micrographia* (1665), linked the use of mechanical instruments in science with the (theological) corruption of the senses: «every man, both from a deriv’d [sic] corruption, innate and born with, and from his breeding and converse with men, is very subject to slip into all sorts of errors (...) These being the dangers in the process of humane reason, the remedies of them all can only proceed from the real, the mechanical, the experimental philosophy» (Hooke, 1665: 6).

Therefore, two characteristics contrast the rising *experimental natural philosophy* with Aristotle’s speculative methods: a methodology based on quantifiable experiments mediated by mechanical instruments; and a shift towards mastery of the world. Although the consequences of this ethos of the dominion over the world are beyond the scope of this research, it is worth noting that this dominion correlates to the Protestant emphasis on the active life, which focuses on advantage and utility, a dimension Protestantism paradigmatically explored by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, written between 1904 and 1905 (Weber, 2002). Luther insisted that Christians should ‘use’ the world during their earthly life: «to build, to buy, to have dealings and hold intercourse with his fellows, to join them in all temporal affairs» (Luther, 1997b: 239). In correspondence, scientific practices were to be oriented towards the practical goal of restoring human dominion over nature.

Bacon insisted that nature and the works of God showed His power and wisdom but not through symbolic theological meanings in the form of allegories, as medieval theologians had argued, but rather through the complexities of creations that had to be deciphered and interpreted via the method and instruments of modern sciences (Bacon, 1857a: 350). In what follows, I will focus on physiology and anatomy as paradigmatic fields where this shift in the metaphor of *imago Dei* bereft of both symbolic and phenomenological dimensions transforms the entanglement of body and knowledge from the sixteenth century onwards. As we shall argue, the sixteenth-century scopic pulsion of the scientific Reformation is manifested at the same time in a growing fascination with anatomy that Jonathan Sawday denominates as a “culture of dissection” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Sawday, 1995: 4). It is worth noting at the outset that both

Catholics and Protestants were influenced by the rise of anatomical medicine, that is, it would be an oversimplification to state that the advances in the history of medicine were only influenced by the Protestant Reformation. As argued above, the entanglements of science and theology in this period are complex, sometimes explicit and others unintended, but what I will try to illuminate is how the development of a corporal hermeneutic based on anatomy and dissection correspond to the Ocularcentric ethos of modern sciences that we have previously linked to a discrediting of the senses in virtue of a Protestant radical doctrine of the Fall.

One more preliminary remark needs to be made, the widespread enthusiasm for anatomy in the sixteenth century did not constitute a clear-cut change and an immediate abandonment of notions of Galenic philosophy and humoral Aristotelian descriptions of natural history. However, as argued by the historian Charles H. Parker, whose scholarly research focuses on the origins of the Modern World, the development of anatomy in the 1540s set the basis for a progressive dominance of a mechanical Cartesian approach to the body that would be established in the late 1600s (Parker, 2014: 1267). In 1543, Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) published his treatise *De humani corpori fabrica*, which constituted not only a systematization of a long-standing “culture of dissection” but also a manifesto for an empirical methodology in medicine (Vesalius, 1543). During the first decades of the sixteenth century, the rise of anatomy had coexisted with the prevailing Galenic approach to medicine, which had established itself as the medical authority in Western universities since its reception in the eleventh and twelfth centuries through the arrival of Arab and Greek sources into Europe. Galenic medicine was based on four humors, which constituted the components of the body: phlegm, blood, yellow bile, and black bile. The task of medicine was to achieve the balance among the components, which characterized a healthy constitution. Disorders or humoral pathologies arose out of disproportions among humors.

Moreover, Galenic approaches to the body were notably holistic, an approach which became even more marked through the synthesis of Galenic humoral theory, Aristotelian conceptions of body and soul, and Christian anthropology. Scholastic theorists established a semiosis between body, sin, and virtue (Brown, 1989: 198–209, 348–50, 425–26; Bynum, 1991: 181–238). Bodily corruption was linked to sin, and a

healthy constitution with moral virtue. These moral hermeneutics of the body influenced the reception of anatomy in Catholic environments, which can be traced back to the fourteenth century. Parker notes how convents practiced dissections long before the anatomy entered the universities – first in Bologna and Padua – and before European widespread fascination for anatomical theaters: «Outside the university, anatomy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries caught hold among surgeons, other medical practitioners, and even nuns in Northern Italy. Katharine Park has uncovered the practice of “holy anatomies” performed in convents by nuns seeking corporal evidence of saintliness in departed sisters» (Parker 2014: 1269).

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *postmortem* dissections proliferated, and anatomical theaters were built to accommodate audiences of university students and lay enthusiasts (Cunningham, 2010: 18). The complex intellectual crosscurrent between Galenic physiology and body-soul osmosis, and new empirical methods in anatomy slowly moved toward the preeminence of Vesalius’ vindication of empirical descriptions of bodily functions (Sawday, 1995: 4). This displacement from a conception of the body as an inextricable part of a holistic mind-body complex toward an empirical approach to the body was not limited to the sphere of medicine but permeated the different dimensions of early modern culture. A new genre of medical writing emerged: *observationes* or *historia*, reports of case studies of dissections, usually richly illustrated. As Sawday examines, these narratives slowly shaped a corpus of anatomy-inspired art, poetry, and literature: paintings of dissections by Melchior Meier (*Apollo, Marsyas, and the Judgment of Midas*, 1581) and Rembrandt (*Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, 1632), and the motif of anatomy proliferated in poetry and theater, for instance in George Herbert’s *The Temple* (1633) or Noël Le Breton’s *Crispin Medecin*, 1674 (Sawday, 1995: 44, 87).



Fig.8 Rembrandt, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). Oil on canvas, 216.5 × 169.5 cm. Credit: [Mauritshuis](https://www.mauritshuis.nl/en/collectie/1632-001-rembrandt-the-anatomy-lesson-of-dr-nicolaes-tulp), The Hague. Usage terms: Publication with attribution.

How does this affect the configuration of the senses in knowledge? With the rise of empirical anatomy, the experiential dimensions of the living body are discredited, and scientific knowledge is reduced to the observation of corpses. The real knowledge of the body is not to be accessed through phenomenological experiences of embodiment, but rather by observing and measuring the innermost corporal spaces. In a way that can be considered in parallel to the Reformation mottos of *sola scriptura* and *ad fontes*, «in the laboratory, anatomists peeled back layers of human flesh to expose the divine origins of the inner self, obscured by ignorance and convention» (Parker, 2014: 1274). In a moment of questioning of the established traditional authorities and modes of knowledge via the analysis of classic sources, anatomists sought the hidden dimensions of the human body by mapping its innermost interior, to discover the genuine nature of the body and its senses and overcome the illusory exterior and the deceits of experience within a fallen wounded existence.

3.3. The *esprit de corps* of Protestant academies and universities

How did the emergence of new modes of knowledge that the Reformation made possible change the epistemological value of the senses? A good indicator to assess such configuration of the senses in knowledge is the pedagogical method and the curricula of higher education institutions. A comparative examination of the preexisting universities and the new centers that appeared after the Reformation will enable us to weigh how the new conception of knowledge, guided as we have argued by the dictums *ad fontes* and *sola scriptura*, together with an ascending Ocularcentrism promoted by a scientific method instigated by the radical doctrine of the fall, changed the role of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge. I would like to trace the knowledge-power structure underlying the creation of Protestant universities and academies after the Reformation. Considering that the common goal of Protestant and scientific reformers was to delegitimize Aristotelian philosophy, which was the highest intellectual authority in European universities, it becomes comprehensible that university institutions became a target of criticism at the beginning of the Reformation. As part of his campaign to question the traditional belief system of Western Christendom, in favor of the Reformation, Martin Luther undertook an anti-university polemic, attacking the leaders of Catholic universities which were Luther's opposition and accusing higher education institutions of being mere means for status-seeking and vainglory in his 1521 text *The Misuse of the Mass* (Luther, 1959: 225). Despite their distrust of institutionalized education at the beginning, Protestant religious and political leaders soon saw how pedagogical institutions were crucial to forming an orthodoxy for future generations of community leaders and academically prepared pastors. For this reason, they began investing in institutions of higher education. This led to three phenomena: the reformation of some already existing universities, the creation of new universities, and the development of a new kind of institution: territorial academies.

First, the reformation of preexisting universities – a network of higher education institutions that counted with more than sixty centers in Europe by 1500 (Verger, 1992: 57) – led to a crisis of these institutions because many Catholic professors resigned, and the number of students decreased. Even affluent families stopped sending their sons to university due to the social instability caused by the fragmentation of Western

Christendom and the controversies between the previous Catholic curricula and the new Protestant ethos, focused on a renewed interest in scripture (*sola scriptura*). Sometimes this crisis even caused universities to cease functioning for decades. Notable cases of reformed universities were the University of Wittenberg in 1527, the University of Leipzig in the 1530s, Tübingen in the 1540s, and Heidelberg in 1558. In Lutheran areas, new universities were created, especially in provinces. Protestant universities were founded in Marburg in 1527, in Königsberg in 1544, and in Jena in 1558 (Maag, 2016: 125-6). In Calvinist areas another kind of educational institution emerged: *academies*. Protestant academies were less formal than universities and usually uphold a very specific confessional point. They focused not only on imparting knowledge but also on inculcating virtue in students. For our concerns, this new training in virtue is relevant insofar it makes clearer the influence between institutional epistemology and Protestantism's ethos: as Harrison argues, Protestant practices, attitudes, and particular ethics were distilled into higher education –ethics based on the mistrust of the senses and the damnation of touch and embodiment. The preparation and results of students were not assessed by a degree but rather measured through examinations to see if they were prepared for positions of leadership within the Protestant church. The aptness of the student was testified by letters signed by professors and pastors stating not only his academic performance but also its morals and faith (Maag 2016: 126). Protestant academies were established in Strasbourg, Geneva, Lausanne, and across Huguenot France.²⁶ Therefore, the Reformation led to a change of the institutional structures in higher education, but also to changes in the curriculum, mainly promoted by Philip Melancthon's educational reforms (Howard, 2006: 60–124) and an increased attention to the religious framework and the inculcation morality, especially in Puritan England. This Puritan framework would then impact the colonial and revolutionary higher education system of the United States, such as Emmanuel College (Cambridge, MA) which

²⁶ One of the earliest Protestant Academies was the Lausanne Academy, founded ca. 1537 (Crousaz, 2011: 69). In 1538, protestant educator Johannes Sturm created the Protestant Gymnasium, now the University of Strasbourg (University of Strasbourg, 2023). The Genevan Calvinist Academy was founded in 1559 by Théodore de Bèze and John Calvin, it later became a secular institution during the government of Napoleon; since 1872, it has functioned as a university (Goeing, 2021: 277). In Huguenot France, after the opening of the Academy of Nimes in 1561 (Bourchenin, 1882: 103), the Academy of Sedan was central. Bourchenin points out that "the collège was not opened until 1579, and the proper academy in 1602" (Bourchenin, 1882: 114). The Academy of Saumur opened its doors even later, in 1599 or 1600 (Bourchenin, 1882: 143). Finally, the Academy of Die opened as late as 1604.

became a model for American Puritan centers of higher education (Marsden, 1994: 33–84; Ryken, 1987: 40-3; Van Engen, 1987: 19–3).

Concerning the curricula, in Europe during the sixteenth century, both Catholic and Protestant universities focused on the study of classical Roman and Greek texts, fostered by the Humanist motto *ad fontes*. The classical core was to be maintained in Reformed universities because Renaissance Humanism was considered the ideal that should shape excellent educational approaches. In the mid-sixteenth century, the scholastic emphasis on logic was replaced by a focus on rhetoric. In Reformed curricula, however, the study of canon law was replaced by civil law, the study of Hebrew was added, and more attention was given to the exegesis of scripture, through literal and historical interpretations by one professor dedicated to the Old Testament and another to the New. Despite a continuity of pedagogical approaches with Catholic institutions, especially with regards to humanities, Lutheran and Reformed higher education centers standardized the learning method: students were to learn by taking notes word for word from their professors. The increased number of students seeking positions of leadership in Protestant churches impulse the creation of practical training modules and preaching practice, which made academies and institutions even more attractive and valuable; and at the same time, the aforementioned standardization of higher education made possible a uniform and consistent method of assessment of candidates' fitness for ministry by Protestant churches (Brockliss, 1996: 565–67; Pittion, 2011: 37–38). As Maag points out, «the Protestant investment in higher education did not simply ensure good schools but was part of a broader plan to standardize and increase the level of preparation for clergy. Vetting committees could reasonably expect that a candidate who had attended one of the Huguenot academies would have adequate preparation in Greek, Hebrew, scriptural exegesis, doctrinal knowledge, and homiletic practice» (Maag 2016: 129).

For the purposes of our current research, it is relevant to note two effects of the impact of the Protestant Reformation on Higher Education. The emphasis placed by Protestant institutions on forming future pastors led to a growth in the number of institutions of higher education across Europe from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, which at the same time enabled young people who had previously had no access to university training – especially those who lived in the provinces and could not afford to

be displaced to a university – to have the opportunity to enroll in higher education. This constituted a significant departure from the Catholic church apparatus: clerical preparation until the Reformation consisted of apprenticeship, of transference of practical knowledge of the doctrine, practices, and care of the parishioners by a more experienced pastor. From the Reformation onwards, the clergy was expected to be academically trained, having spent several years in higher education institutions. The first effect of this is that if academic training was imparted through a pedagogical method that consisted mainly of taking notes word for word, it is feasible to put forward the hypothesis that academically trained clergy would have greater discursive knowledge, but would lack competencies in terms of care practices and lived knowledge that only apprenticeship could afford. Therefore, in terms of the distribution of the senses, there seems to be already an ascendancy of rational discourse over embodied practices, which would affect the configuration of worship in Protestant churches.

The second effect concerns the social structure that emerges in the Protestant church in virtue of the academic training of pastors. First, despite the proliferation of universities and academies in provinces and the scholarships promoted by the Protestant church, the requirement of academic preparation already barred the youth coming from impoverished and rural backgrounds to pursue a career in the church. Before the academization of the pastorate, they could access those social roles through the system of apprenticeship, but with the new assessment of clergy that opportunity became unachievable. This inaccessibility led to a growing distance between the pastor and the parishioners. The gap between the pastor and the churchgoers became greater not only due to the elevated social and economic status of the pastor but also due to an epistemological difference that was even more marked in rural areas. Therefore, the establishment of a predominant intimacy between the Protestant church and higher education institutions provided a standardized and supervised system to train clergy, with a common curriculum and assessment procedure for future ministry, generated what Maag denominates «an *esprit de corps* among the clergy that often perpetuated itself from father to son in pastoral dynasties» (Maag, 2016: 133) that crossed linguistic and national borders in virtue of a common curriculum and confessional perspective. However, this intimacy was built to the detriment of closeness between parishioners and pastors that

could only be transmitted through an apprenticeship system that paid attention to bodily worship, practices of care and listening, and experiential knowledge.

3.4. Touch as idolatry: the radicalization of disputes over religious truth

In the previous section, the Reformed higher education institutions have been connected to an alteration on the distribution of the senses during worship in virtue of a process of academization of the pastorate. This transformation was characterized by the motto of *sola scriptura*, vindicating the value of the visible – to read – and the sonic – to hear the Word of God. It is from this sensory framework that the persecution of idolatry would arise. It is worth noting that, as Parker points out, during the controversies of the Reformation over religious truth, both Catholics and Calvinists developed new hermeneutics for real bodies, that governed the readings of disease, sex, and gender. Parker notes:

Ironically, Catholic and Calvinist polemicists arrived at roughly the same place: the sexualized body signified heresy and idolatry. (...) The bodies of men and women were all at once a marvel of anatomy, a subject of art, and a metaphor for Christian society. The body also continued to serve as a barometer of the soul because corporality remained integral to perceptions of religious difference in an age of confessional conflict and epistemological uncertainty. (Parker, 2014: 1291-2)

Catholics linked bodily pathologies – mainly described in terms of Galenian humoral physiology – with heresy, in a permeable way where there does not seem to be a unidirectional causal relation. Some authors seem to argue for a body-to-soul direction, while in others a soul-to-body direction where heresy has detrimental effects on the body prevails (Parker, 2014: 1281). On the other hand, the Protestant critique on sensuality and the body appear within the critique of idolatry. Sensuality is seen as a portal for idolatry and as an erroneous way of worship that distracts from the true faith in God. Idolatry was a core target for Protestant reformers, mainly in the Calvinist tradition, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For Calvinists, idolatry is a corruptive practice of false worship that distracts from the transcendence of God. It must be considered that idolatry, as condemned by Calvinists, is not only restricted to ascribing sanctity and divinity to physical tangible objects – the corruption of idolatry embraces a wide range of Catholic practices involving bodily and tangible dimensions that do not necessarily involve an *idol*, but which pollute both the soul and the body. Activities and habits

regarded as idolatry included bowing down before an image, veneration of relics, ingestion of a consecrated host, and even attendance to those practices. Carlos Eire has analyzed the political dimensions of the persecution of idolatry during the reformation in *War against the Idols* (Eire, 1986). We must remember, as Bynum points out, that the Reformation reacted against as well as drew upon the female religious movements of the later Middle Ages, a highly embodied female piety that emphasized the *orectic*, the sensory quality of symbols, the veneration of relics, and the somatic manifestations of God in flesh (Bynum, 1991: 19). Bynum refers to this sensory aspect of symbols as the *orectic* character, meaning its appetitive dimension and its relation to affective desire (Bynum, 1991: 19). The cult of images, saints, relics, and the Eucharist, which had constituted the core of medieval piety and worship, were condemned as idolatry and argued to lead to diseased and polluted bodies by Calvinism. This damnation of embodied sensual worship as detrimental to true faithful transcendence was fostered by the rise of colonialism and overseas explorations in the seventeenth century:

As Calvinist pastors went into mission fields in Asia, Africa, and America in the 1600s, the encounter with indigenous peoples reinforced their conviction that natural human inclinations turned them away from the true spiritual worship of God toward tangible objects they can see, touch, and smell. (Parker, 2014: 1287)

Therefore, bodily dimensions of practice were interpreted as primitive and idolatrous. These hermeneutics of the bodily and the persecution of idolatry can be connected to a wider project of “disenchantment of the world” undertaken by Protestantism. In his 1905 work *The Protestant Ethic*, the sociologist Max Weber argued that the Protestant Reformation promoted an ethos of disenchantment – the abandonment of miracles, magic, and mystery – which led to modernity (Weber, 2002). The attack on idolatry is correlative of the denial of the allegorical reading of the Bible. To deny allegory was an operation that not only affected the hermeneutics of scriptures, but also the hermeneutics of the worlds, since the logic of the allegory not only connected textual meanings but functioned as follows:

in a literal reading of scripture, a word refers to a thing; in an allegorical reading of scripture, things refer to other things. Thus, allegorical reading depended on the assumption that objects in the natural world bear meanings, and that when scripture refers to these objects, we are then invited to contemplate their deeper theological significance. In other words, allegory is not just about written texts; it has implications for our understanding of natural objects. (Harrison 2016: 111)

The deny of allegory, the persecution of idolatry, and the disembodiment of worship function together as an entangled device to perform a disenchantment of the world. As Robert Yelle has put it, «Weber's account of disenchantment represented modernity as an event of rupture, a break or discontinuity between past and present, tradition and modernity, East and West» (Yelle, 2012: 13). This disenchantment not only leads to a rationalization of the world within science and religion but also shapes the different institutions of power and knowledge of Western culture through an epistemological hierarchy that privileges transcendence over embodiment. In *Provincializing Europe* (2008), Dipesh Chakrabarty develops how such Protestant disenchantment played a role in shaping colonial institutions, where the condemnation of idolatry and its connection to disease served as an argument to justify the re-distribution of senses and bodies in the colonies. Chakrabarty exposes how Weber's Protestant ethic is a provincial construct instead of a universal idea. Chakrabarty notes that «the so-called universal ideas that European thinkers produced in the period from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment» and we must add the Reformation that affected and was affected these crossing social, cultural and intellectual phenomena

and that have since influenced projects of modernity and modernization all over the world, could never be completely universal and pure concepts ... For the very language and the circumstances of their formulation must have imported into them intimations of pre-existing histories that were singular and unique ... Irreducible elements of these parochial histories must have lingered into concepts that otherwise seemed to be meant for all. (Chakrabarty, 2008: xiii).

It is worth noting that Chakrabarty refuses to «reproduce any sociology of religion»— including Weber's—partly to avoid perpetuating the dubious narrative of disenchantment, since «one empirically knows of no society in which humans have existed without gods and spirits accompanying them» (Chakrabarty, 2008: 16). As we have argued, theological categories imported by a modern secularization of Protestant ethic illuminate the epistemological distribution of the senses, which in turn help elucidate the colonial discourse on primitivism and sensuality that gave rise to the construction of racial and colonial categories. The Christian, and especially Calvinist burden of these colonial categories specially shaped the Western assessment of magic, superstition, idolatry, and bodily religious practices, which were condemned as primitive and comparatively inferior to the disembodied objective reason of modern science.

CHAPTER II. CRITICALLY DISMANTLING OCULARCENTRISM: CRAFTING A TACTILE REGIME FOR ACCESS ARTS

1. Touch and the regime of tactility

After developing an archaeology of touch in the pages above, the aim of this chapter is to present an existing theoretical framework which connects aesthetics and political philosophy that can, to a certain extent, accommodate and account for artistic practices in Critical Disability Studies and Disability Justice, specifically those that fall into the broad tag of Access Art. These practices constitute a radical response to the Ocularcentric government of the senses that has shaped museum institutions since the early XIX century and the *tactile amnesia* (d'Evie and Kleege, 2018) this regime has led to. Some scholars have provided an exhaustive and chronological history of touch from the Reformation, where we concluded last chapter, to the setting up of current institutions and disciplines of the senses in the XX Century, a task that has been thoroughly undertaken by Paterson (2007, 2016), Classen (2012), and Danius (2002).²⁷ Although the archaeological tactic has shown the Ocularcentric tradition that spans across centuries until Modern epistemologies, explicit mainly in the coeval figures of René Descartes (1596-1650) and Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the approach of this chapter shifts towards an epistemology of the senses that comes close to a Rancièrian standpoint.

²⁷ These historiographies of touch reveal the complex relationship between epistemology, politics, and sensory experience from Modernity up to Postmodernity, traversing the Enlightenment. Danius and Paterson focus on the role technologies of vision have had in the organization of the senses. Paterson pays special attention to the interest in touch, vision and blindness in French Enlightenment's philosophies, taking into serious consideration Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* (Paterson, 2016: 109-137). It is worth mentioning that in Disability Justice circles, Diderot's essay is deemed as one of the few philosophical attempts to examine blindness from authenticity and not with a bad faith that transforms it into a *trope* or literary resource that has nothing to do with the experiences of B/blind people. Paterson points out this abstract depiction of blindness, denominating it 'hypothetical' blindness, a term he borrows from Georgina Kleege's 'Hypothetical Blind Man' (2005) – which is a reflection of ableist fobias – in contrast with 'actual' blindness, that constitutes «a spectrum of abilities and visual acuities within the encompassing label of 'blindness'» (Paterson, 2016: 9). For Classen (2012), touch and vision are studied from a sociological standpoint, providing a cultural history of touch that embraces its many dimensions, from pleasure and relic fetishism to the social usages of pain narratives. For us, Classen's analysis of tactile arts and sensations in the school, the prison and the museum are of special interest, especially because it locates in the same cultural plane the governing and disciplining mechanisms of educational, carceral, and museum institutions. Concerning museums, Classen resorts to diaries and testimonies of museumgoers to provide a meticulous account of the distribution of the senses in museums and how the prohibition of touch and the imperative of silence are not hegemonic and eternal, but rather constructed under a very particular model of power that does not solidify itself until the nineteenth century (Classen, 2012:171-178; Classen 2007: 896-900).

This shift responds to the aim of this chapter, which is to recover those epistemological resources that will enable us to revisit Disability Justice artistic practices in such a way that they can be understood in relation to a tradition, and more particularly a critical tradition that stems from Kant. I will argue that with the emergence of the critical tradition, starting with Kant's three critiques, a new philosophical framework operates where the manifold senses of touch acquire significance and epistemological value. Rancière's notion of the *regime of visibility* and the *partage du sensible* will help us understand how such emergence is politically charged and, therefore, can accommodate and make sense of the practices of Disability Justice. The critical tradition directs an attack on Modern dualisms and *either/or* thinking (Collins, 1991: 225), decidedly claiming that mind and body are not two separate entities, and that knowledge is not restricted to disembodied discursive knowledge. This claim is recovered in two relevant lineages that can account for the radical vindication of touch and embodiment in Disability Justice: phenomenology and Pragmatism. What phenomenology and Pragmatism will enable me to do is to account for the cultural, symbolic, and political dimensions of the embodied knowledge generated in Disability Justice practices. This chapter rests on the previously established premise that Western Greco-Christian value theory led to an Ocularcentric culture up to Modernity, and its guiding argument could be structured as follows:

1. Modernity value theory *and* epistemology were both guided by a principle of Ocularcentrism.
2. What we consider to be valuable and the knowledge we deem as valid structure a regime of visibility and a political distribution of bodyminds in the social fabric (Rancière).
3. Therefore, Ocularcentric culture generated a distribution of the sensible where disabled and nonvisual bodyminds were deemed invalid.
4. In this culture, touch is considered as a lower sense, and this rejection is expressed in the codes of conduct that govern bodyminds.

These three steps constitute the precedent conditions for our current inquiry, and they rely on the connection between epistemology, social structure, and sensory regimes established by Rancière (2000, 2008, see below). From this, it will be argued that

5. A critical tradition that starts with Kant constitutes a blatant alternative to an Ocularcentric framework and therefore opens an *other* regime of the sensory, with new possibilities for the distribution of the senses.
6. This new regime rejects either/or dichotomies and favors a relational and ecological approach to experience.
7. Among the different ways of experiencing the world, aesthetic experience is elevated as a source of embodied knowledge.
8. Therefore, aesthetic symbolic worldmaking becomes a privileged field to build a critical alternative regime of the senses that dismantles Ocularcentrism.
9. In this kind of aesthetic experience, the bodily senses and most notably touch acquire a primacy, thus reconfiguring our disposition towards ourselves and human and non-human others.
10. If we cultivate such embodied aesthetic experiences, we will weave a new sensory regime that affects modes of governance, reconfiguring our embodied and tactile practices that open up or even effect a social change.

To describe the primacy of touch in practices that foreground embodied aesthetic experience to open a new regime of sensibility, I will use a distinction between touch and tactility that has its analog in the binomial vision/visuality, used by Rancière in his notion of the regime of visibility. This additional distinction is needed due to the limitations of Rancière's aesthetics when discussing Disability Arts and Culture, namely the fact that even when he does indeed introduce a sensibility that attends to the materiality of aesthetic experience, his choice of words in the technical term "regime of visibility" (*régime de visibilité*) and his focus on images remain laden by in the Ocularcentric tradition of French thought (Rancière, 2000, 2008). When transposed to the sense of touch, I propose that the distinction vision/visuality can acquire the following meaning:

- *Touch* refers to the many senses of touch, from pressoceptors and thermoceptors, to haptic touch and the recently more attended senses of proprioception, kinesthesia, and the vestibular system.²⁸

²⁸ This broad conception of touch has been developed mainly in analytic philosophy of touch, especially by Brian Keeley (2002) and Matthew Ratcliffe (2012), who have continued the Aristotelian tradition of demarcating the senses; Matthew Fulkerson (2013, 2014), who has contributed to the debate with notable reflections on distal touch and sensory pluralism; and Brian O'Shaughnessy (1989), who pioneered the broadening of touch to include proprioception and kinesthesia.

- The regime of *tactility* is an even broader scope that embraces not only physiological and neuroscientific discourses on touch but also cultural and political discourses on contact and how they are imbricated with the lived experience of the body.²⁹

First, I will clarify the scope of *touch* by bringing forward the phenomenological notion of the lived body and how it understands touch, with the objective to move away from Neoplatonist discourses that limit themselves to the demarcation of the senses and that only dialogue with neuroscience from a positivist perspective. The theoretical framework I aim to sketch works based on a synesthetic and interwoven, and a more inter-affective understanding of sensory as epistemologically plural which goes beyond visual and discursive learning. Once *touch* has been characterized, I will circle back to Rancière to craft a framework that explains what a regime of tactility could feel like, i.e., a sensory regime that uses tactility to break down the either/or approach to the senses that still rules over the regime of visibility, and how Disability Justice practices have the potential to open such a regime. For our purposes, the sense of *touch* can be characterized drawing on conceptual resources from the pioneers of phenomenology, who foreshadowed the contemporary debate on the relationship between proprioception, kinesthesia and touch when they shifted from the standpoint of natural sciences towards a felt description of experience.³⁰ The concepts of touch, skin and flesh are especially relevant in the late works of Husserl and throughout Merleau-Ponty's writing. Introducing touch as a feature

²⁹ This distinction is similar but *not* equivalent to Paterson's distinction between 'immediate' and 'deep' touch (Paterson, 2007: 2-3). For Paterson, 'immediate' touch refers to everyday tactile-spatial experience, while 'deep' touch is affectively-charged, and has a metaphorical connotation. The criteria for distinguishing touch and tactility does not correspond to this, first and foremost because here the extended scope of touch is not considered a neutral sense either, touch as an embodied experience is affectively charged and shaped by context-dependent determinants, as we will clarify when discussing complex embodiment. For instance, the manipulation of plastic resin and cast skulls of Bear, Beaver, Rabbit and Coyote for the sculpture series *Skull Stories* (2012) by Mi'kmaw artist Jordan Bennet is not neutral despite being an immediate contact, it is charged by affects and stories from his Indigenous ancestry. Neither is tactility metaphorical, on the contrary it is the discursive and effective structure that has very real and material consequence on people's skins, bodies, and ways of sensorially being in the world.

³⁰ The interpretation of phenomenology's historical pioneers in this dissertation is heavily filtered by contemporary approaches in critical phenomenology. I must acknowledge my bias when approaching primary sources from my immersion and debates in circles that stand on the trail of Indigenous, Feminist and Crip phenomenologies. It is worth mentioning the compelling volume edited by Gail Weiss, Anne V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon, *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology* (2020), where a myriad of scholars from diverse intersectional landscapes discuss the current critical revisions of traditional phenomenological concepts coming mainly from Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Levinas; as well as the neologisms such as *compulsory able-bodiedness* or *Misfitting*.

that accompanies the lived body, the phenomenological tradition was able to shed some light on the role of touch as a condition of possibility for agency. That is, how do we direct our intentionality towards things and others that inhabit our surrounding world, the *Lebenswelt*? It is always from a *here*, from a standpoint which is my body. However, both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's accounts of touch are far from this simplicity and engage in the debates of the passivity of tactile experiences as well as the relationship between the unity of the lived body and the self. In order to assess the contribution of the phenomenological tradition to contemporary approaches to touch that will be analyzed in what follows, this section will be structured around two key concepts that are directly related to our main question, which is the demarcation of touch in the philosophy of the senses: firstly, Husserl's distinction between *Leib* and *Körper*; and secondly, Merleau-Ponty's concept of reflexivity in touch, mainly regarding the double sensation of the experience of touching oneself.

1.1. *Leib* and *Körper*: extensionality and borders in Husserl

In *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (from here, *Ideas*), especially in sections §§ 36-40 of *Book II*, Husserl applies the phenomenological method to the problem of the constitution of the lived body. From the standpoint of a genetic phenomenology, Husserl analyzes how the body is given to the subject originally, and establishes the primacy of touch in acquiring such a constitution: «The Body as such can be constituted originally only in tactility and in everything that is localized with the sensations of touch: for example, warmth, coldness, pain, etc» (Husserl, 1989: 158). But he distinguishes between two kinds of body: *Körper* and *Leib*. The *Körper* (in the English translation 'body') is the mechanical and geometrical body that remains close to the physical objects surrounding the Self, the Cartesian *res extensa*. It is a physical body «situated in space in the same way as a physical thing» (Luoto, 2018: 95). The *Leib* (in the English translation 'Body') is the lived body, the corporeality as experienced in action and perception, the «only object that I master immediately, and especially govern each of its organs» (Husserl, 1989: 128). Therefore, *Leib* is closely related to agency and to the horizon of possibilities of the Self: it is the zero-point (*Nullpunkt*) from which any subjective orientation can be shaped, the absolute *here* which constitutes the standpoint of the Self. It is worth mentioning that in *Cartesian*

Meditations, this *here* will be established in virtue of a difference with the Others, as Velozo puts it, the Other questions the objectivity of my status as a subject «he questions me in my deepest being insofar as I am a member of the objective world and I pretend to give it some sense from myself (*aus mir selbst*). There is, therefore, a fundamental tension between two requirements» (Velozo, 1992: 362), the requirement of objectivity of the Self, and the challenge to precisely that objectivity from the Other. It is in this tension that the *here* of the lived body is constituted.

In *Ideas*, the lived Body (*Leib*) is always located in an primordial *here* that positions and orients it in space, and it is this orientation which determines the way things appear: «each self has a perceptive domain of things, and necessarily perceives things in a certain orientation» (Husserl, 1989: 158). Therefore, the Body is a source of determination – but, at the same time, the *here* is the zero-point of my possibilities of action, i.e. of my agency. This agency is transformed in virtue of the movement of the body since, as my body changes positions and orientation, things appear in different ways. This is specially salient in the dancing body – take Laura Vilar’s *Sanjiao o la no forma*, performed at nunArt in 2016, where the contemporary dancer carries out an impro solo created *with* a birch’s branch, letting the object modify and co-lead her agency. As the dancer describes, «the birch tree’s branch is the other side of the two traction points that establish relation and imaginary in the solo, what is generated in-between is the meeting of two juxtaposed realities. Working with the element of the branch implies the full acceptance of its physical conditions and limitations» (Vilar, 2017: 62). As the bearer of will and movement, the lived Body is our medium to realize any activity in the world, but this agency is co-modified by the things of our environment which, in the case of Vilar’s embodied creative process, are also endowed with some kind of agency: the birch branch has agency to immediately modify the body just as the body can offer new possibilities and situations to the branch. Through the coordinated movement of the body and the branch, things can show aspects and profiles that a previous perspective did not give me. Despite Husserl endows the Body with much more agency than contemporary approaches, it is in early phenomenology that the Body already presents itself as a

counter-member to nature through which the agent enacts free acts.³¹ The important contribution of phenomenology is how the lived Body «has the capacity (“I can”) of freely moving this Body and the organs which articulate it» (Husserl, 1989: 152) and it is due to this link to the active capacities of the Self that touch and the lived Body are connected to agency. Therefore, for Husserl, there are two ways of apprehending my body «as a physical body of nature (*Körper*) analogous to other bodies, and as my “own organic Body” (*eigentliche Leib*), through which I insert myself in nature, I join it» (Veloza, 1992: 364). This second way entails an engagement and an intertwining (*Verlechtung*) with the world, thus providing a consciousness of being part of the world, that Husserl terms as a «worldly apperception of myself» (*verweltlichende Selbstopperzeption*).

1.2. Reflexivity: the double sensation of touch

The second relevant aspect of the phenomenological analysis of touch is the emphasis on reversibility, that is, on the double-sensation that takes place in the event of touching: in touching, the skin is at the same time touching and touched. The remarkable double-sensation of touching can be experienced, for instance, in the tactile perception of one’s own hand: «Touching my left hand, I have touch appearances, that is to say, I do not just sense, but I perceive and have appearances of a soft, smooth hand, with such a form» (Husserl, 1989: 152). Nevertheless, apart from the properties of my left hand, I also perceive the touching right hand through «the indicational sensations of movement and the representational sensations of touch, which [...] belong in fact to my right hand» (Husserl, 1989: 153). My own left hand is perceived by me as both touching and touched, perceiver and perceived. The double-apprehension of touching one’s own hand can be extended to all tactile encounters. As Luoto argues,

in distinction to real properties belonging to physical things, the [tactual] sensations belong to me and constitute, in their co-appearing with the physical properties, my own body. The tactual perception of an object is then necessarily bound to the self-feeling of the perceiving, lived body, occurring with the sensation of being touched. It is a body which feels itself, that is, a body as subject. Hence, tactually perceiving an object, I tactually sense myself as the one who perceives. (Luoto, 2018: 97-8)

³¹ Sánchez and Medina (2018: 11) have provided a detailed account of the relationship between the body and the free self in Husserl.

The surface, the profile of my body parts is not perceived as a thing-like entity, it is sensed as «more than a material thing» (Husserl, 1989: 157), as a living entity with its own agency. The double-apprehension of tactile encounters is further developed by Merleau-Ponty as the idea of reversibility. Merleau-Ponty establishes an analogy between seeing and touching in order to extend the reversibility of the touching and the touched to all sensibility. In vision, he claims, the «look [...] envelops, *palpates*, *espouses* the visible things» (Merleau-Ponty, 2000: 133), since *visual palpation* is merely a variation on tactile palpation. From this standpoint, Merleau-Ponty argues for the primacy of touch and poses touch as the paradigmatic sense by reference to which an analysis of the rest of the senses can be carried out. The characteristic reversibility of tactile encounters becomes a model for wider structures and is extended to the relation of the body to the world. Reversibility becomes an ontological principle that transfers the epistemological undefinition of the subject-object beyond my body, towards the body-world relationship. As Luoto puts it, for Merleau-Ponty,

if the reversibility is without coincidence or fusion, that is, if touching is never exactly the touched and seeing never exactly the seen, so the vinculum of the self and the world is marked by a divergence, an *écart*, which is constitutive of the body's openness toward the world. (Luoto, 2018: 108)

The intra-subjective relation with one's body which constitutes the lived Body is therefore marked by an openness: the reversibility of the body, which becomes an ontological principle in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the flesh, establishes that the sensing-sensed body has a double character in virtue of which its interiority can only be established in relation with an exteriority. Consequently, my own body is essentially open: it is conditioned *by* and constituted *with* an exteriority, an openness that defines its ex-sistence, its being towards outside – being-to, *être-à*. The extension of the reversibility of palpation to all sensibility can be seen as a figure of discourse, as a hyperbolic and metaphorical device that is fruitful in conveying the shared material relationship that is established between the subject and the world in each sensible encounter. In this aspect, broadening the scope of tactility to all the senses is a useful strategy so as to shed light on the incarnated and ecological character of sensibility. The incarnated character of our engagement in the world, our incarnate existence as our mode of being-in-the-world, is articulated by the reversibility of tactility in the concept of *flesh*

(Merleau-Ponty, 2000: 137). For a more detailed analysis of the role of *flesh* in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the senses, and how it articulates the relationship between vision and touch, it is convenient to resort to Cathryn Vasseleu's *Textures of Light*, which examines Merleau-Ponty's notions of living flesh and vision in the flesh by reference to what she denominates "carnal light" (Vasseleu, 1998: 21). For Merleau-Ponty, *flesh* is «the prototypical structure of all subject-object relations» (Vasseleu, 1998: 26), it constitutes a focal point from which the questions concerning the demarcation of the senses, the body-world relationship and the sensing-sensed reversibility can be conceptualized. Flesh is the incarnation of sensibility in a body that touches, a body that is immersed in the world and which is also touched by it – therefore, in Merleau-Ponty, the touching-touched flesh remains, as in Aristotle, a source of tension and discrepancy that problematizes (rather than solving) the demarcation of the senses and leads to the immersion into the thick density of sensuous experience.

1.3. Police Ocularcentrism and regimes of tactility: reintroducing the aesthetic

Once we have defined the phenomenological width of the lived experience of the manifold senses of touch as will be considered in this dissertation, the regime of tactility will be introduced as a technical term that encompasses scientific, political and cultural discourses on touch. These discourses conform the field of intelligibility that enables us to make sense of touch in a way that opens the horizon for our thoughts, beliefs and attitudes around tactility. Here, I am indebted to Rancière's concept of sensory regimes and how this concept enables us to explain the overlapping and complex relation between politics and aesthetics. In what follows, I will introduce the different levels operating in Rancière's thought concerning sensory regimes. This introduction will try to explain the role each concept plays in the social architecture he proposes, and to advance how this proposal can serve us to account for an alternative to Ocularcentrism which Disability Justice artistic practices can contribute to.

The proposal of Rancière can be understood as an ambitious architecture that makes sense of how communities are organized, if developed top-down, and of how social movements can transform the configuration of the common, if we read it bottom-up. For simplicity, I will develop first the top-down structure. The first element to introduce is

Rancière's distinction between politics and police, which acquires a technical dimension in his thought. Politics and police constitute two *logics* that encompass every social organization and which are always in tension. Police is the logic of stability: the social organization that determines the role of each bodymind in the community, in a dynamic position within which each one does what they should do. In his essay *Disagreement*, he introduces this logic as follows:

On the one hand, there is the logic that simply counts the lots of the parties, that distributes bodies within the space of their visibility or their invisibility and aligns ways of being, ways of doing, and ways of saying appropriate to each ...the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it the police. (Rancière, 1998: 28)

Such organization of bodies, activities, and affects is always vulnerable to subversion, and that is precisely the moment of irruption of the logic of politics. That is, for Rancière, politics is a logic reserved to those times where the organization established by the police is subverted – in other words, when there is a conflict that forces a reconsideration of the agreements that held together the police order. Politics is consequently «the other logic, the logic that disrupts this harmony through the mere fact of achieving the contingency of the equality, neither arithmetical nor geometric, of any speaking beings whatsoever» (Rancière, 1998: 28). To continue with Rancière's architecture, each logic constitutes the conditions of possibility for specific sensory regimes, which are the field that sustains different “modes of visibility”, a term which I propose to broaden to “modes of perceivability” to accommodate all the senses. For instance, the poetic regime in the arts sustained a representative mode of perceivability in plastic arts. These modes are mere structures which are materialized in distributions of the sensible (*partage du sensible*) that have very real effects on bodyminds, determining their position in the community and their occupation, which includes not only their job and activities, but also how they inhabit space and time, their affects, and their attitudes.

In a recent conversation with architect Farshid Moussavi at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, which took place in October 2018, Rancière developed further how this structure is materialized in the way of being in the world of each bodymind (Rancière & Moussavi, 2019). In his address, Rancière focus on embodiment is much more emphatic

than it was in his previous definition of the police logic and the politics logic in *Disagreement* (1998):

Politics deals with the way in which bodies fit or don't fit in a space, a space that is both material and symbolic. What I call *police* is the organization of a community where everybody is at his or her own place. This doesn't mean that they are immobile, but it means that they move in the circle of activities defining their occupation, meaning at once their job and the way of being suiting their position in the community. What I call *distribution of the sensible* is not only a distribution of occupations, it is also a structure of the visible, a distribution of the bodies in a common landscape. *Politics*, I assume, starts with a disruption of that landscape, it starts with a dissociation of the normal relation between the materiality of places and their symbolic signification. (Rancière & Moussavi, 2019)

This new formulation features a choice of words can connect the police/politics distinction to two key terms in Critical Disability Studies. First, these logics are here connected with «the way in which bodies fit or don't fit in a space» (Rancière & Moussavi, 2019): in police logic, appropriateness means that there is a premise that each body (i.e., bodymind) is distributed into a space where they fit; but in politics logic, it becomes manifest how in fact this ideal fitting does not obtain. Fitting is therefore contingent and depends on the police order distribution of the sensible, in a way that determines which bodyminds are fitting and which become misfits. In Critical Disability Studies, scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has coined the term *misfit* to designate precisely a particular interaction between a functioning bodymind who finds themselves in an environment that is unable to sustain it, whereas an harmonious fit occurs when a bodymind and the environment have a relationship of adequacy: «The concept of misfit emphasizes the particularity of varying lived embodiments and avoids a theoretical generic disabled body that can dematerialize if social and architectural barriers no longer disabled it» (Garland-Thomson, 2011: 592).

Therefore, misfitting is a relational concept, and it becomes relevant when the distribution of the sensible is governed by a an ableist police logic that generates particular modes of perceivability that privilege (socially and spatially) those who find themselves in a position of able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, while positioning disabled bodyminds as misfits in a state of inferiority. Nevertheless, Garland-Thomson also emphasizes the creativity endowed to this position of inferiority which forces on to negotiate the distribution of the sensible constantly to survive, pointing out «adaptability, resourcefulness, and subjugated knowledge as potential effects of misfitting» (Garland-

Thomson, 2011: 592). This subjugated knowledge refers to an awareness of the socio-spatial regime governing the normative modes of perceivability that generate an ableist distribution of occupations and spaces, which is more difficult to cultivate by temporally able-bodied able-minded bodyminds since «environmental fit makes nondisabled people less aware of their own embodied privilege» (Hamraie, 2013). Due to a standpoint that recognizes the oppression that comes with the systemic misfitting of disabled bodyminds, Critical Disability Studies confers a judgment of value to ableist police logic to a greater extent than Rancière does, and considers misfitting as a position from which a political disruption of such ordering logic can be subverted for the sake of collective liberation through Disability Justice activism.

The second term used in the recent formulation of the police/politics distinction is that of the normal. According to Rancière, politics is characterized by «a dissociation of the *normal* relation between the materiality of places and their symbolic signification» (Rancière & Moussavi, 2019, my emphasis). Although he is thinking here about the assembling of barricades and the occupation of public space in the Paris Commune of 1871 (Rancière & Moussavi, 2019; Rancière, 2023), the way he conceives of *normal* relationships between spaces and how we inhabit them as susceptible to being disrupted is remarkably aligned with the contingency of *normalcy* vindicated in Critical Disability Studies. Claiming that politics *is* a disruption of the distribution of the sensible in the normal common landscape entails, from the standpoint of CDS, that it unsettles what Garland-Thomson has called the dominant *normate* of able-bodied sane male whiteness (Garland-Thomson, 1997: 8). Acquiring here a technical dimension, the neologism *normate* designates

the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries ... Normate, then, is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them. (Garland-Thomson, 1997: 8)

To translate it into Rancière's architecture, then, the normate is that bodymind which fits into the occupation attributed to them by the distribution of the sensible without any conflict, dissensus or dispute. For Garland-Thomson, the normate is an ideal that complies with the identity of the community and does not challenge the established order

because they do not differ in any way from contingent privileged normalcy. At the same time, the normate is an exclusionary figure because it is constituted against disabled bodyminds which are in turn are excluded from the community. In contrast with the normate's compliance, disabled bodyminds will consequently open a breach on the apparent consensus and sameness ordering the common landscape.

To conclude our introduction of Rancière's architecture as a resource to make sense of the tension between a hegemonic Ocularcentric regime of the senses and an alternative synesthetic regime with a primacy of tactility, I will retrace our way back to the top, from the distribution of the sensible back to the governing logic of police. To do so, we will consider what is the breach in police logic that prevents it from ruling eternally, which will lead us to the issue of how a political logic can emerge as a disruption. The logic of police governs a distribution of the sensible characterized by adequacy and fitting where the community keeps moving within a certain organization that attributes a role and a position to each individual – to each their own. This order of the *common body* disregards individual differences or other ways of organizing the common life, presenting itself as the only possibility. However, the seed of revolt inhabits the police order, as a menace that can make palpable the *de facto* contingency and historicity of every particular distribution of the senses. Police logic protects itself by establishing difference and otherness as *wrong*, in an attempt to preserve the agreement that holds the order together in an appearance of general consensus:

So consensus, before becoming the reasonable virtue of individuals and groups who agree to discuss their problems and build up their interests, is a determined regime of the perceptible, a particular mode of visibility of right as *arkhe* of the community. Before problems can be settled by well-behaved social partners, ... the identity of the community with itself must be posited, along with the rule of right as identical to the elimination of wrong. (Rancière, 1998: 197-8)

However, the positing of this consensus is not harmless: the consensus on the *identity* of the community leads to a fixation on radical otherness, which becomes the target of «absolute, prepolitical hate» and «the figure of the other is exaggerated» in exclusion and a desire for elimination (Rancière, 1998: 119). Although in *Disagreement* Rancière theorizes the mandatory intolerance to difference required by an appearance of consensus concerning racist dynamics, his argument on the effects of establishing the

identity of the community well apply to ableist dynamics and phobias towards disability. For Rancière, it is this «miscount of the people in the breakdown of the population» (Rancière, 1998: 119), i.e., the misrepresentation of who counts and who does not, that opens the field for dissensus and dispute, in a conflict that showcases the failure of police and the emergence of politics.

What are the conditions of possibility for political logic to emerge? And through which tactics does it operate? For Rancière, politics emerge out of a dispute, a dissensus or a conflict that challenges the distribution of the sensible of a particular police logic. This dispute is materialized in a revolt, which can be the starting point of a revolution that «undoes the sensible fabric» (Rancière, 2013: 60). But this undoing is not spontaneous and absurd, it is a strategy to displace the sensory regime governing the current state of affairs and requires a set of tactics that subvert specific elements to dismantle the established order of the senses. One of these elements is *space*, which has been mentioned above like a battlefield where positions can be disputed by transforming normal relations to the spaces we inhabit; two additional elements are *time* and *knowledge*. Concerning time,

the opposition was not between short time and long time, but it was about homogeneous time and heterogeneous time. Revolt is not absurd, it means the opening of a new time and all revolutions have started as revolts, meaning that they waxed with a certain order of time. So, they are not an evanishing moment, but a reconfiguration of the coordinates of time and space. (Rancière, 2023: 28)

Time is a conflicting dimension because the police logic, we have argued, establishes a sensory regime where only certain modes of perceivability can appear, and each mode of visibility or mode of tactility has a particular time profile. Therefore, subverting the temporal order has the potential to open new modes and displace the distribution of the sensible. There may be something subversive, then, in spending hours examining a sculpture through touch in a gallery that is governed by the fast pace of visual inspection (d'Evie and Kleege, 2018), or in making room for slow speech in an academic environment, for example. The last element that revolts can tactically subvert mentioned by Rancière is the field of science and knowledge:

revolt is not irrational, absurd, but a form of experimental knowledge. Again, against dogmatic views that see revolution as application of science claiming that first you have

to know, and when you know you can act. The idea is action *is* a form of knowledge, a form of reconstruction of knowledge. The unfolding of the revolt alters the very forms of knowledge and of the knowledgeable; it produces new knowledge about situations, institutions, and it awakens new capacities for perceiving, thinking and action. Revolt is a form of knowledge and action, precisely because it transforms the very landscape of knowledge. (Rancière, 2023: 29)

The idea that action *is* a form of knowledge and the relationship he establishes between perception, thought and action connects Rancière to trends that vindicate the epistemological value of lived experience and the intimate link between perception and cognition, most notably to enactivist approaches that will be examined below through the work of Alva Noë. For now, what I want to emphasize are the three arenas where a disruption of the distribution of the sensible can be performed, i.e., space, time and knowledge, because they will be precisely the dimensions altered by the politics of aesthetics as conceived by Rancière.³²

To account for the relationship between Disability Justice artistic practices and its activism, Rancière's conception of the politics of aesthetics is notably fruitful. It is worth mentioning, beforehand, that his conception does not entail that *all* art is political – there are indeed regimes of perceivability that produce artworks which are «prejudicially linked from the outset» to a certain police distribution of the sensible and which confirm that ordering (Rancière, 2013: 9). Art is police when it reinforces the established common «ways of doing, making, seeing and judging» and complies with «a regime of visibility [t]hat renders the arts autonomous and also ... links this autonomy to a general order of

³² In 1980s avant-garde aesthetics there were two main trends: and anti-art school of thought championed by post-Marxist Social constructivism and Dada, and exemplified by Hal Foster's 1983 anthology, *The Anti-Aesthetic* (features contributions by Jean Baudrillard, Douglas Crimp, Kenneth Frampton, Craig Owens, Edward W. Said, and Gregory L. Ulmer, and by critical theorists Jürgen Habermas, Fredric Jameson, and Rosalind Krauss); and a "return of beauty" upheld first by critic Dave Hickey and radicalized by Arthur Danto and Elaine Scarry. A third-alternate emerged with Jacques Rancière's conception of aesthetics, which differed from the depolitized aesthetics defended by the two former trends and emphasized how aesthetics participates and shapes historical social and perceptual structures (Hinderliter, 2009: 8). Rancière's main contribution to aesthetics is his account of three regimes of perceivability which characterize three eras of the arts. In *The emancipated spectator* (2008), he presents the ethical, representative, and aesthetic regimes of the arts. The *ethical regime*, which accounts for Platonic understandings of the arts as a tool to educate citizens as fitting for their occupation; the *poetic* or *representative regime*, which values the arts as virtuous crafting according to a formal criteria «within a classification of ways of doing and making, and it consequently defines proper ways of doing and making as well as means of assessing imitations» (Rancière, 2013: 9). The modes of perceivability in this regime are governed by the concept of *mimesis*. Lastly, the *aesthetic regime* of the arts abandons the mimetic conception and does not seek to represent the distribution of the sensible as it is: it seeks to disrupt and displace such distribution and transform it by opening new forms of perceivability that do not comply with the established sensory regime (Rancière, 2013: 40).

occupations» (Rancière, 2013: 9) - through this compliance, art as police «enters into a relationship of global analogy with an overall hierarchy of political and social occupations» (Rancière, 2013: 17). Contrastingly, political art does not comply with the reigning distribution of the sensible and defines a form of dissensus and a disruptive configuration of the common landscape. This establishes an intimate relationship between aesthetics and politics because both constitute practices that «reconfigure the fabric of sensory experience» (Rancière, 2010: 140). Circling back to the tactics of revolt, artistic practices performs such a reconfiguration by altering space, time and knowledge practices, creating «forms of 'commonsense', regardless of the specific message such-and-such an artist intends to convey» (Rancière, 2010: 141) – these forms of ‘commonsense’ are other in relation to the sensory regime established by the police logic, and therefore open a framework for distributions of the sensible that was not open in the previous fabric of experience. From within a particular sensory regime,

artists are those whose strategies aim to change the frames, speeds and scales according to which we perceive the visible, and combine it with a specific invisible element and a specific meaning. Such strategies are intended to make the invisible visible or to question the self-evidence of the visible; to rupture given relations between things and meanings and, inversely, to invent novel relationships between things and meanings that were previously unrelated. (Rancière, 2010: 141)

If there is a politics of art, it resides in artistic practices’ potential for «changing existing modes of sensory presentations and forms of enunciation» thus «building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective» (Rancière, 2010:141). Nevertheless, this does not entail that arts and aesthetics are conflated and become identical. The arts retain their autonomy because there is a significant difference in the disruptive ways of the aesthetic regime of the arts and the dispute that opens the field for the political to emerge. On the one hand, the reconfiguration of the sensible brought about by political action is an *effect* of «collectives of enunciation and demonstration» who manifest a form of subjectivation, «the framing of a *we*» that vindicates «the part of those who have no part – not the wretched, but the anonymous» (Rancière, 2010: 141). On the other hand, aesthetic reconfigurations of the sensible are possible because of the latent dissensus that inhabits the apparent homogeneity of the common landscape, but it manifests itself in a way that produces effects but that «implies the suspension of any direct cause-effect relationship» (Rancière,

2010: 142). Rancière translates this lack of direct cause-effect relationships as an aspect of undecidability in the aesthetic: the disruption performed by the arts

undoes the sensible fabric – a given order of relations between meanings and the visible– and establishes other networks of the sensible, which can possibly corroborate the action undertaken by political subjects to reconfigure what are given to be facts. There are aesthetic formulas and transformations of these formulas that always define a certain ‘politics’. There is not, however, a rule establishing a concordance ... The politics of works of art plays itself out to a larger extent – in a global and diffuse manner – in the reconfiguration of worlds of experience based on which police consensus or political dissensus are defined. It plays itself out in the way in which modes of narration or new forms of visibility established by artistic practices enter into politics own field of aesthetic possibilities. (Rancière, 2013: 60)

The global and diffuse way in which artistic practices reconfigure the common landscape and the sensible fabric accounts for the way in which we will assess Disability Justice arts as an opening of new forms of perceivability that do not have a direct cause-effect relation – as Disability Justice activism has by enunciating particular demands that seek effective policy changes. The transformation triggered by the aesthetic is much more subtle and uncertain, but, as it will be shown, this uncertainty is part of the commitment of Disability Justice arts to provisional structures and temporary agreements that are constantly renegotiated, thus evading the reification of a rigid distribution of the sensible and keeping their dynamics in the realm of politics. Once having introduced Rancière’s architecture, I will revisit the contributions of a Pragmatist tradition that can further contribute to understanding the way in which artistic practices can transform and reorganize the sensory fabric of experience, thus dismantling Ocularcentric regimes. This transformation will be framed as a political practice throughout the chapter due to the Rancièrian standpoint established so far.

2. Broadening epistemology: the emergence of critical traditions

Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible. (Klee, 1973[1920]: 182)

In 1920, Paul Klee opened his *Creative Credo* with this enigmatic dictum, which negates the traditional mimetic function of art – reproducing, copying reality – in favor of a new task: *Sichtbarmachen*, making visible. This shift endowed art with a much more performative, agential and productive character. Art does something, art *makes* visible. But at the same time, this turn gave rise to an array of questions that are cannot be evidently solved. First, what is it that art makes visible? Second, if art *does* something, does this entail that art becomes a subject of action and not a mere object? And, finally, what is the value of the outcome of this making visible beyond mere visibility? The triple question of *what*, *how* and *what for* will tingle across this chapter, as we explore this *Sichtbarmachen* task of art with the prospect of revisiting in from the standpoint of tactility in what follows. Before embarking ourselves in this task, it is sensible to mark how Klee’s dictum is used here as a paradigmatic instantiation of a shift of artists’ awareness of a new conception of art in Modern Art. However, it should not be considered as a turning point or as a clear cut in history, since such transition go against the nuanced interplay of sensory regimes in aesthetics that permeates this chapter. As Rancière argues:

There is, in fact, no historical point of rupture on the basis of which it became impossible to write or to paint in the old fashion and necessary to do it in a new way, no point of return that brought about a shift from an art of representation to an art of presence or of the unrepresentable. But there is a slow re-configuration that provides the same ways of doing/making ... with a new visibility and new form of intelligibility on the basis of which new ways of doing/ making arise. In other words, the concept of regimes of art undermines the idea of an historical rupture with respect to the constituent elements of art. It undermines, then, the games of opposition under which people have sought to conceive of the idea of an artistic 'modernity': transitive/intransitive, presence/representation, representation/unrepresentable. These concepts profess to designate constitutive entities, or distinct constituting principles, between two moments and two forms of art. But such a distinction is purely imaginary and pertains to nothing real. (Rancière, 2010: 208)

In trying to answer the question on “What does art make visible?”, it will become clearer how such a productively dynamic conception of art can help us in making the case for a broader sense of epistemology which does not comply with the traditional concept of thought in concepts and propositional knowledge. Classical philosophical ideas of what knowledge is placed it within discourse, in particular, discourse that is formulated in

concepts. Here it is worth quoting Immanuel Kant's definition of thought in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: «Thinking is cognition through concepts» (Kant 1999 [1781/1787]: A69/B94). Other translations have opted to translate this passage as «Thought is knowledge through concepts» (Kant 2007 [1781/1787]: A69/B94). So thought is restricted to conceptual knowledge and, since concepts consist of predication, conceptual knowledge is linguistic, discursive, and takes shape in propositions. This definition apparently forecloses other modes of knowledge that are not conceptual. Therefore, what is Kant's role in the building of a regime of tactility? Two elements need to be considered here. First, Kant's epistemology indeed focuses on predication that is grounded on a dualistic conception of the binary object – subject: the subjects predicates something about the perceived object. However, I believe Kant's input to be valuable in the pursue of a regime of tactility insofar he «replaces the dogmatism of truth with the search for conditions of possibility» (Rancière, 2013: 47). As Rancière puts it, the Kantian contribution to epistemology was a shift towards conditions of possibility which, historically, opened up a field of disagreement and debate that was not intelligible before. In this sense, the Kantian proposal of seeking conditions of possibility as an epistemologically valuable philosophical task performs a very political act, in the Rancièrian sense of «restag[ing] a philosophical notion or debate within the wider rationality of that distribution of positions and capacities, a distribution of the sensible ... This means creating scenes where an idea is put into test in a wider stage» (Rancière, 2023: 52). Second, Kant himself hints at other modalities of research that may produce modes of knowledge that do not strictly fit propositional knowledge. In the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic: On the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason* of the first critique (Kant 1999 [1781/1787]: A642/B670), he states that although transcendental ideas cannot be fully captured by conceptual knowledge, i.e. «are never of constitutive use», they play a role in investigation and reflection acting as a *focus imaginarius*:

they have an excellent and necessary regulative use, namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the lines of direction of all its rules converge at one point, which, although it is only an idea (*focus imaginarius* – i.e. a point from which the concepts of the understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience – nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension. Now of course it is from this that there arises the deception. (Kant 1999 [1781/1787]: A644/B672)

This regulative use that moves understanding but which cannot lead to a determinate concept resonates with the definition of *aesthetic ideas* Kant would give later, in the *Critique of Judgement*, where they are characterized as follows:

by an aesthetic idea, however, I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible. – One readily sees that it is the counterpart (pendant) of an idea of reason, which is, conversely, a concept to which no intuition (representation of the imagination) can be adequate. (...) One can call such representations of the imagination ideas: on the one hand because they at least strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas), which gives them the appearance of an objective reality; on the other hand, and indeed principally, because no concept can be fully adequate to them, as inner intuitions. (Kant 2002 [1790]: § 49)

Kant's aesthetic ideas already point towards the possibility that there would be a different kind of knowledge which would be non-discursive and non-linguistic, functioning and being transmitted through other kinds of symbol systems, which he locates precisely within the aesthetic realm. Out of this possibility arises a new set of questions, mainly concerning what the relationship between discursive and non-discursive knowledge is. Is there a hierarchical relationship so that non-discursive knowledge is pre-linguistic and less articulated or rigorous than the discursive mode? May this hierarchy be related to the diminishing of touch as an ineffable sense -the discursive being fixed, the many dimensions of touch being unceasingly dynamic? These are the challenges that Kant's successors would have to face, a whole new field of struggle and uncertainty in epistemology that would *coexist* with its previous problems in a widened stage that reframed the whole discipline. To conclude the assessment of the Kantian proposal to broad epistemologies, what the critical project developed was a new form of expression through which new regimes of intelligibility could be built – to translate it into Rancièrian terms, such an emergence of a form of expression

depends on a historically constituted regime of perception and intelligibility. This does not mean that it becomes invisible with the emergence of a new regime. I thus try at one and the same to historicize the transcendental and to de-historicize these systems of conditions of possibility. Statements or forms of expression undoubtedly depend on historically constituted systems of possibilities that determine forms of visibility or criteria of evaluation, but this does not mean that we jump from one system to another in such a way that the possibility of the new system coincides with the impossibility of the former system ... At a given point in time, several regimes coexist and intermingle in the works themselves. (Rancière, 2013: 47)

Circling back to Klee and his statement of art's *making* visible in his 1920 credo. The European context after the First World War, mainly the 1920s, saw the flourishing of Modern Art and Avant-garde. Although Braque and Picasso had already developed Cubism as early as in 1907 and Expressionist theater had emerged with Kokoschka's *Murderer, The Hope of Women* (1909) and the first plays by Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller, it was only after 1918 that the explosion of *isms* occurred in the arts.³³ For our purposes, it is not the 'visible' that interests us from Klee's claim, but rather the 'making'. That is, the differential element of Modern art is not working with images, which is precisely the thread that connects them with the inherited tradition of the plastic arts' canon. What shifts in Modern Art is the awareness of artists' of being *producers* of images and objects which, in turn, are dynamic in a way that they can *make* new things visible. Although Klee's credo remains attached to an Ocularcentric paradigm, the emphasis on the visible would become as important as the tactility of the work even in the artist's own trajectory. When we revisit Klee from the standpoint of a regime of tactility, our attention is rapidly directed toward his later work, a period which we can consider to begin in 1935, when he started suffering from a mysterious disease that would later be diagnosed as scleroderma.³⁴ This condition, which caused him a hardening of the skin, a chronic fatigue associated with anemia, and pain flares, did not affect Klee's hands (Suter, 2014: 109) and he continued his artistic production. Nevertheless, scleroderma definitely provoked a metamorphosis of Klee's way of being in the world, because we can assume that tactile sensations of pressure and pain became much more salient due to the swallowing of muscles and joints and the tightening of the skin.

The salience of touch is manifested in his later works, where homogeneous organized figures characteristic of his 1930s compositions of geometric bodies (*Körper*) are replaced by the experimentation with open-ended lines. These organic, curved and

³³ I resort here to Sam Phillips (2012) broad definition of *isms*, which encompasses Modern Art from Impressionism to contemporary street art. In the argumentative development of this section, I focus on the *isms* that span from the beginning of the 20th century up to post-World War II American Abstract Expressionism, as a period of flourishing that is characterized by a proliferation of movements grounded through a community of artists and practitioners.

³⁴ Scleroderma is an illness often classified as a rare disease, which starts affecting the skin and rapidly affects the tissue of internal organs. Etymologically, it comes from the Greek *skleros* (σκληρός) and *derma* (δέρμα) which means hard or hardened skin. Klee «had this disease in its most severe form – 'diffuse systemic sclerosis'» (Suter, 2014:109) which caused him a mask-like face and hardening of the neck's skin and the esophagus. He died only five years after the start of the illness.

indetermined compositions might as well be a way of making visible, or making *palpable* the dismembered and fragmented quality of the proprioception of a Body (*Leib*) in pain. This is the case of the 1937 work *Hart und weich I (Hard and Soft, I)* currently in the collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Beyond the title, which already echoes scleroderma as the hardening of the skin, the choice of materials – i.e. charcoal and pigmented paste on a smooth newsprint – enable Klee to play with the pressure of the trace. Alexa Greist, Associate Curator of the Art Gallery of Ontario, who has examined closely the work, points out how in the drawing «there are areas that are darker than other, there are areas where more of the charcoal is on the page. And areas where there is less, it's thinner, almost translucent, where you can look through it and see the paper» (Art Gallery of Ontario, 2020). These variations convey a feeling of *weight*, so that hard and soft qualities could be doubled as gravity and levity as well (d'Evie & Kleege, 2018).

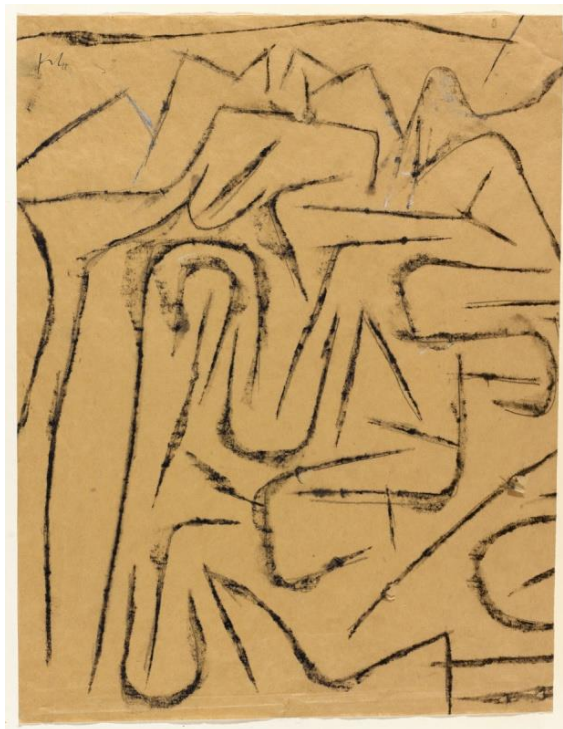


Fig. 9 Paul Klee. *Hart und weich I (Hard and Soft, I)*. 1937. Charcoal with traces of pigmented paste on newsprint on card, Sheet: 35.7 × 27.7 cm. Gift from the Women's Committee Fund, 1955. © Art Gallery of Ontario 54/13. The drawing is positioned vertically. The paper is smooth and of an earthy fawn color. At the top, there are some straight pointed lines resembling the outline of a mountain range. As we move downwards, a composition of more organically curved lines becomes more and more dismembered and horizontal. Most of the lines are open, making it impossible to demarcate individual figures. The different pressure applied by the artist can be traced by the width and transparency of the lines. Klee made a second drawing with the same title, *Hart und weich II*, which is currently on sale in the art market.

Another paradigmatic late work by Klee is *Plötzlich Starr (Suddenly rigid)*, which he produced a few months before passing away on June 29, 1940. Hans Suter, author of *Paul Klee and His Illness* (2010), proposes to read Klee's last drawings as diary-like exercises expressing his fears. I want to avoid assessing whether these drawing express ableist phobias of body abjection and disability without further evidences for the argument, I will restrict the interpretation to the phenomenological dimension of how his painful condition could have transformed his own lived embodied experience in such a way that he could produce new kinds of images such as *Plötzlich Starr* puzzling, partly dismembered but nonetheless human figure. To conclude, we can use Klee's trajectory as a paradigm of a double movement that is frantically performed in Modern Art: first, the endowment of artworks with a kind of agency of *making*, and secondly, the slow opening of a breach from which the *visible* starts to be just one more dimension among the many senses that can be awoken by artworks when they cease to be abstract images and become object immersed in a fabric of experience *with* human bodyminds.

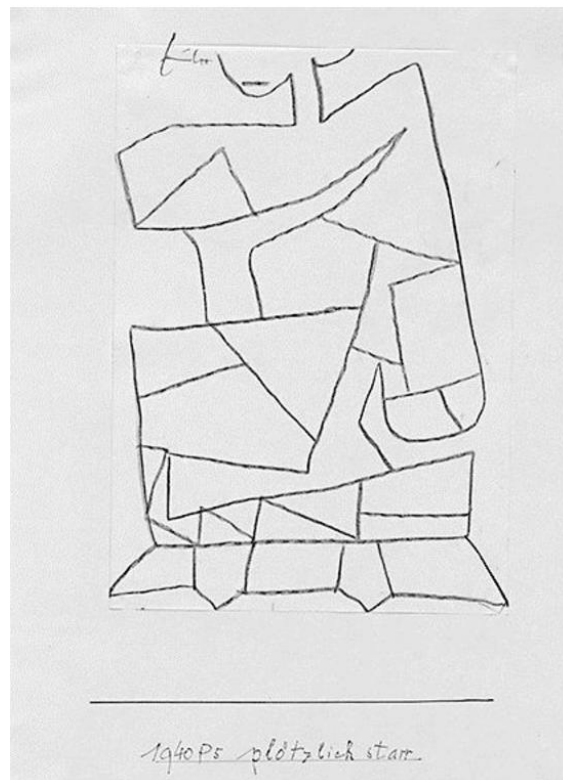


Fig. 10 Paul Klee, *Plötzlich Starr (Suddenly rigid)*. 1940, 205, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern. Black deep lines contrast with a white background in a geometrical composition where stark angles predominate in what seems to form a human-like figure. The top part seems an unfinished head and neck and the arms may be embracing the torso in a comforting gentle position. The body is fragmented inside in a myriad of geometrical closed figures.

After abandoning a purely mimetic paradigm of art, Modern Art's producers would be faced with a challenging reflection on their own practice: how can art *make* something? Does this entail that art becomes a subject of action? And, if so, what kind of agency is this non-human agent enacting? In order to elucidate how the birth of Modern Art is linked to the attribution of a performative and agential potential to the artwork at the beginning of the twentieth century, let us complete this chapter's triad with the addition of a phenomenologist who, taking in hand Husserl's legacy and appropriating it in a way that brought the body, the flesh and touch to the fore, enabled a conception of aesthetics which, far from ethereal abstraction, recovered the mutual involvement of an embodied artist and raw materials in artistic practices: Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In his 1964 work *Eye and Mind*, Merleau-Ponty points out how the irruption of Modern Art has made us reconsider the relationship between humans and Being. As we can put it in contemporary terms, Modern artworks challenge and rearticulate the network of relationships between human agents, and between human agents and non-human others: objects, non-human animals, AI entities, and the environment. The main asset of this rearticulation is that the distinction between object and subject clearly articulated in dualist Cartesian epistemology is put into question. Artworks become endowed with some kind of agency, as Merleau-Ponty puts it:

As for the history of works of art, in any case, if they are great, the sense we give to them later on has issued from them. It is the work itself that has opened the field from which it appears in another light. It transforms *itself* and *becomes* what follows; the interminable reinterpretations to which it is *legitimately* susceptible change it only in itself. And if the historian unearths beneath its manifest content the surplus and thickness of meaning, the texture which held the promise of a long history, this active manner of being, then, this possibility he unveils in the work, this monogram he finds there—all are grounds for a philosophical meditation. But such a labor demands a long familiarity with history. We lack everything for its execution, both the competence and the place. Just the same, since the power or the fecundity of art works exceeds every positive causal or filial relation, there is nothing wrong with letting a layman, speaking from his memory of a few paintings and books, tell us how painting enters into his reflections; how painting deposits in him a feeling of profound discordance, a feeling of mutation within the relations of [humanity] and Being. Such feelings arise in him when he holds up a universe of classical thought, en bloc, up against the explorations of modern painting. This is a sort of history by contact, perhaps, never extending beyond the limits of one person, owing everything nevertheless to his frequentation of others.... (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 179)

Concerning our problem of how art can *make* visible, Merleau-Ponty's passage gives us some clues and conceptual tools to understand it. The use of the artwork as the subject of predications with active reflexive pronouns, emphasized by the author for

example in «it transforms *itself*», endow it with an agency of its own – it is the artwork which performs these actions instead of being a mere passive object which is *created*, is *seen* and is *interpreted*. The effective character of the artwork is linked to what Merleau-Ponty calls an active way of being. This “active manner of being” of the work refers to its generative potential, which exceeds causality and filiation in a strictly logic sense. On one side, this accounts for the inexhaustibility of the artworks, since infinite legitimate senses can arise out of it. On the other side, excess means that the work is never fully captured by one sense attributed to it, and therefore it brings forth the limits of propositional knowledge, which is incapable of fully exhausting it. Merleau-Ponty also provides us with some insight of what the outcome of *making visible* is. When confronted by the *puissance* of the artwork, and he explicitly refers to the Modern paintings, one has «a feeling of profound discordance, a feeling of mutation within the relations of [humanity] and Being ... when he holds a universe of classical thought, en bloc, up against the explorations of modern painting» (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 179). That is, what comes out of the *showing* and *making visible* performed by the artworks is experience as a feeling of discordance. This discordance is a tension between classic thought – to circle back, what can be *said* in Wittgenstein’s terms, or conceptual knowledge in Kant’s terminology – and Modern painting’s investigations – what is shown, what lies in the remote offbeat territories of language. It is worth mentioning that Merleau-Ponty’s reflections have been very influential in museum studies, up to the point where the Guggenheim Museum of New York created in 2013 the program *The Mind’s Eye*, a clear not to the French phenomenologist. This program includes outcomes like *The Mind’s Eye: A Sensory Guide to the Guggenheim Museum* (Guggenheim, 2020) that describes notions like sound, light, scale, touch, flow and continuity; and the collaboration with Carmen Papalia and Georgia Krantz, *The Touchy Subject* in 2013 (Papalia, 2013) which consisted of guided tours by the educational staff where the visitors explored the building with their eyes closed, as a non-visual experience.

But what is the value of the outcome of art’s making visible? To circle back, I have argued for a broad sense of knowledge which comprises a non-discursive and non-conceptual knowledge brought forward by aesthetic explorations that consist of *making visible*, which has been characterized in the process of tackling two questions: *what* is made visible and *how* is this operation enacted. Finally, the third question remains: *what*

for? That is, what is the outcome of this showing? That which the explorations carried out in Modern Art show is two-fold: first, they show how the supposedly transparency of the mimetic task of art was a pretense, i.e. art is not a neutral reproduction of reality defended by illusionistic naturalism; and secondly, they affirm the possibility of different ways of articulating the relationships between humans and Being that the standard structures of language and mimetic representation had maintained numb. In other words, the outcome is the opening of new possible modes of relationship both with other humans and with aforementioned non-human others, thus rethinking how we live and bringing into the field of artistic explorations social and political issues of gender, race, disability, and ecology. Here, I use ‘political’ in the sense established by Jacques Rancière, that is, as our mode of relationship with the other in terms of how the distribution of the sensible, of places and roles, but also of intelligences and affects (Rancière, 1998). And as argued by Merleau-Ponty, that is precisely what Modern Art that challenged the mimetic paradigm brought forth: the display of a *mutation* in the relationships with others.

To continue with Rancière, he argues that in both Kant and Schiller the aesthetic suspension is a suspension of a hierarchical regime, which he links to a political reconfiguration beyond hierarchical distributions of lifestyles. Neither does understanding determine sensibility, nor does sensibility completely escape and free itself from understanding. It is a manifestation of a free play in a field of excess, where neither of the faculties can exhaust the experience. In reference to discursive knowledge, I argue that the aesthetic approach, which means an alternative mode of knowledge based on showing and which distances itself from discursive and conceptual knowledge, should be considered from a pluralistic point of view of epistemology. The broad epistemology we have been presenting throughout the chapter does not take the form of a pyramid, an ascending line or any other hierarchical form. I imagine it rather as a volcanic archipelago, with different islands, some of them emerging out of the same source of lava, sharing the same tectonic plate, others separated by deep fault lines. In this geographical landscape, there is no axiological or temporal priority. To clarify what we mean by epistemological pluralism, we are returning to the beginning of the twentieth century and the flourishing of *isms*. The emergence of Dada and Surrealism, two particular *isms* which specially challenged our modes of relationship to the world, was heavily pulled by the rise of a new sociological approach that challenged the hegemony of Western canonic knowledge and

vindicated a heterogeneity of modes of knowledge. It is in line with this lineage that argument in favor of non-discursive knowledge has been implicitly developed, although some thinkers do not explicitly recognize – and maybe are not aware of – the input of this anticolonial trends in their epistemological proposals.

In 1925, Lévy-Bruhl, Mauss and Paul Rivet founded the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Paris, which was to promote anthropologic research and publications, and which would be pioneering in the developments of the discipline of anthropology in France, changing the ways to relate to non-Western objects, societies and thought (Kelly 2016: 326). Nevertheless, Lévy-Bruhl's theory of "primitive mentality" in *La mentalité primitive* (1922) conceived thought in totemic communities as a state of undifferentiation and mystic participation and still defended that such thought was a prelogical state of mind that lacked the rigor of civilized European and Western developed reason and logic. This is the reason why surrealists like Breton felt more attracted to a line of anthropology which refuted Lévy-Bruhl's hierarchical epistemology and defended the horizontal relationship between Western and non-Western modes of knowledge. This tradition was led in the Surrealist context by Oliver Leroy, who in 1927 published his response to Lévy-Bruhl, *La Raison primitive*, and it continued throughout the century towards the theories of Lévi-Strauss. In 1962, the latter published *La pensée sauvage*, where he argues that the logical structure of primitive thought is opposed but equal to the rationality of Western science (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). It is within this lineage that a defense of a pluralistic epistemology which establishes a non-hierarchical relationship between discursive and non-discursive modes of knowledge locates itself.

After having elucidated what will be meant throughout the current research by discursive and non-discursive knowledge, broad epistemology and epistemological pluralism, it still remains unclear how this non-discursive knowledge is related to the arts. I have kept resorting to aesthetic instances in order to elucidate non-discursive knowledge, but why is the realm of the arts a privileged domain for the acquisition of non-discursive knowledge? In the following section, it will be argued that aesthetic experiences are a promising domain for the development of such knowledge, thus opening up the doors for artistic research as the practice of producing, experiencing and reflecting on artistic works which become agents that trigger thought and action.

Aesthetic experiences, either as producers or spectator, are springboards for reflection through an embodied encounter with the artwork which inaugurate new ways of relation with the other. This conception of aesthetic experiences has two main elements, which will be developed in what follows: first, it is an eventual theory and, consequently, these experiences and their epistemological outcome will be characterized adverbially rather than substantively; second, it blurs the line between artist and publics (thus the *either* as producers *or* spectators) since both are embedded agents in aesthetic experiences which are characterized by being a practice which functions within specific aesthetic symbol systems.

Before moving forward, a slight modification must be introduced into Klee's formula of «art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible» (Klee, 1973 [1920]). The fact that this dictum gravitates around the visual is significant, since it contributes to an Ocularcentric language that privileges vision over the other senses in both epistemological and aesthetic terms, and therefore feeds at the same time an ableist paradigm that equates vision with knowledge, and blindness with ignorance. If we want to conceive of aesthetic encounters as embodied encounters with artworks that inaugurate new ways of relating to the other, and thus as contributions to some kind of knowledge that surpasses the traditional notions of propositional knowledge, we must also take language beyond itself. To think about aesthetic encounters, we should take into account the senses in their plurality, embracing some degree of synesthesia within the embodied agent. For this reason, when accounting for Disability Justice artistic practices, we may choose to modify Klee's formula into: «art does not reproduce the *perceivable*; rather, it makes *perceivable*» where perceivable means access to one or more of the senses.

3. Aesthetic worldmaking and the reconfiguration of experience

The agency provided to the artwork by Klee's claim of *making perceivable* shares this idea of transforming the regime of perceivability with Rancière's aesthetics, although in the latter the change triggered by artworks has a much more revolutionary character, expressed in the notion of disruption. However, neither Klee nor Rancière provide the conditions of possibility that make such aesthetic agency possible, nor the tactics that can fulfil the transformative strategy that artistic practices are claimed to be susceptible of

performing. To examine such tactics, we need to examine the elements of aesthetic experience in a way that breaks down with binary Ocularcentric conceptions of aesthetic experience as a subject that passively contemplates an artwork in front of them. In order to move towards a relational embodied and – *pace* Kant – interested aesthetic experience, I will examine how each of its elements function: first, artworks as elements within a symbolic system; second, human agents as embodied beholders; and third, aesthetic encounters in themselves as an experience. To begin, I find fruitful to revisit Nelson Goodman’s analysis of how symbol systems have a transformative character – insofar they constitute *ways of worldmaking* (Goodman, 1978: 20) – and particularly how aesthetic symbol systems work, to account for the reorganizational potential Rancière attributes to them.

Goodman’s theory of symbol systems is first and foremost an epistemological proposal that aims to account for and justify at the same time a pluralistic understanding of knowledge as ways of doing, feeling and thinking. The problem of knowledge is central in Goodman’s thought throughout his life – in this sense, he belongs to a critical tradition that dates back to Kant and that finds in Cassirer a direct precedent of Goodman’s proposal.³⁵ Therefore, in his analysis of symbol systems, setting the conditions of possibility for these systems to operate is a recurrent strategy. I set Cassirer as an

³⁵ However, Cassirer’s philosophy of symbolic forms, which he developed mainly between 1923 and 1929, did not come out of nothing. It will be important to our approach to Goodman’s thought to locate Cassirer’s symbolic forms in the myriad of intellectual energies that were blooming in the middle of the twentieth century. The publication of Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1857-1913) *Cours de linguistique générale* in 1916 was a breakthrough for both linguistics and semiotics and his view of language as constitutive and active organizer of human experience rather than as just representative shaped Cassirer’s thought, despite their disagreement on other aspects of linguistics such as concept formation (Ding, 2010). Contemporaneously with Cassirer but on the other side of the Atlantic, C. S. Peirce (1839 – 1914) was developing his threefold notion of *signs* as icons, indexes and symbols, which would become fundamental for semiotic analysis globally. The uprising of semiotics did not only have an impact on philosophy: semiotic analysis became a powerful methodology for comparative sociology and anthropology as well. In the study of material culture, the notion of the *symbol* as something that stands for and refers to another thing enabled the study of how material objects and behavioral aspects could be employed to generate meaning in virtue of their symbolic character. That is, material culture is not only vital to satisfy the physical needs of the community through tools and technological means, but it also has a symbolic character so that material elements embody and generate cultural meaning (Giddens 2001 [1986]: 75). In the 1920s, the Chicago School of Sociology would draw on the generation of meaning through the symbolic character of behavior to formulate the principles of *symbolic interactionism*, which conceives that practically all interactions between individuals entails a symbolic exchange within a shared symbolic universe (Giddens 2001 [1986]: 752-753). Pioneering figure of symbolic interactionism, Erving Goffman (1922-1982) initiated a novel paradigm in sociology: *microsociology*, which focuses on microsocial processes of interaction and how meanings and symbols affect and shape such action (Goffman, 1956).

intermediate knot in this critical lineage because he performs a shift that will set the basis of Goodman's proposal: Cassirer focuses on *symbolic forms* in order to investigate the ways of knowledge production. To parallel Goodman's aesthetic question, Cassirer transforms the question of "What is knowledge?" to "*When* is knowledge?". Symbolic forms thus appear as ways of constructing knowledge that organizes our existence. That is, knowledge is not conceived as ideal apart from human existence to be discovered but is imbricated in human practices – hence Cassirer's title of the anthropological standpoint of his thought. Epistemological construction consists of the creation of symbolic meanings – this is why humans are defined by Cassirer as "symbolic animals" (Cassirer, 1944), since they arrange their practices around these symbolic universes, mainly based on natural language and myth.

For Goodman, a conception of symbol systems as ways of worldmaking explores how symbolic dimensions structure human existence – for us, this is relevant because it challenges an understanding of symbol systems as abstract and endows them with an effective power on material embodied conditions that ranges from the construction of knowledge and ways of thinking to the social distribution of bodies in time and space, and the organization of affects. Furthermore, Goodman argues that such ways of structuring human existence have an epistemological value in themselves, which is assessed according to Goodman's epistemological virtues of symbol systems: a symbol system contributes to knowledge to the extent it is «*apt, effective, illuminating, subtle and intriguing*» (Goodman, 1976: 32-33).

Goodman is interested in the creation of symbolic universes which entail both, cognitive and aesthetic dimensions. It is for this reason that his main contribution to a broader epistemology is a conception of plural and procedural knowledge (Ammon, 2012; Capdevila, 2012). In *Languages of Art: An approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Goodman, 1976) and *Ways of Worldmaking* (Goodman, 1978), Goodman traces a symbol-theoretical base which points to a such plural knowledge that accounts for the different ways of knowing which are not limited to propositional knowledge. For Goodman, understanding is a creative process of meaning-making which leads to some kind of knowledge, which in its turn affords us new possibilities of action, therefore generating a transformative dynamic. According to Ammon (2012), Goodman provides a differentiation of the

epistemic field within which a concept of knowledge can be rehabilitated, although very distanced from the traditional concept of knowledge as propositional true justified belief.³⁶ Goodman's broader notion includes non-propositional variants such as how-to knowledge and aesthetics as knowledge. In the case of aesthetic symbol systems, they will constitute contributions to knowledge to the extent that they shed light on new likenesses and distinctions, novel associations which enable us to reorganize, remake our worlds. This reorganization introduces changes and displacements in our experience, interest, practice and attitudes – an understanding of aesthetics that does not fall far from Rancière's idea of how the aesthetic operates «varying frames, scales and rhythms; and building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective» (Rancière, 2010: 141).

The scope of this dissertation, albeit ambitious, is unable to encompass the entire corpus of Goodman's theory of symbol systems and reference. But Goodman's aesthetics and specifically the five symptoms of the aesthetic that he provides in «When is art» (Goodman, 1978: 67-68) are instrumental in our understanding of the *tactics* deployed by and the ways of operating of aesthetic symbol systems as privileged triggers for experiences which are sources of some kind of aesthetic knowledge. I want to emphasize how the Goodman shifts from providing *requirements* or *conditions* for notational systems, to *symptoms* in aesthetic systems: a symptomatic relation has a level of indeterminacy that precludes direct cause-effect relationships. Therefore, Goodman – like Rancière – suspends necessity in the realm of aesthetic symptoms in such a way that symbol systems that show these symptoms may or *may not* make a world, i.e., set the conditions of possibility for a stage, where aesthetic experiences can take place. Before studying the factors that constitute the symptoms of the aesthetic, some basic concepts of Goodman's analysis of symbol systems need to be introduced. Concerning the methodology employed, Goodman establishes the priority of *function* when examining symbol systems. A symbol is characterized by *how it functions within a given symbol system*. This contextualist approach permeates Goodman's aesthetics and is central for

³⁶ Since I depart from a conception of knowledge as plural, contingent and context-dependent, the notion of Truth remains bracketed throughout this thesis. However, for a panoramic view of the problem of Truth in the arts, I recommend Dieter Mersch's volume *Epistemologies of Aesthetics*, which examines the intersections and the possible equivalence between the notions of art and truth-seeking research (Mersch, 2015: 61-114).

his notion of worldmaking: the construction of symbol systems and of knowledge consists of modifications of the way symbols function, and of their relationships with other symbols, other systems and with their field of reference. Symbol systems are constructions that structure worlds, hence worldmaking is a symbolic activity, an exercise of symbolic creation that articulates our way of living.³⁷

Symbol systems thus structure our worlds, and it is for this reason that they are tools for *worldmaking*. For Goodman, all types of symbolization have a referential element: there is something which *stands for* and *refers to* something else in different modes. Reference can be either *representation* or *exemplification*, which includes expression and metaphors. These two modes can be combined and result in cases of *complex reference*, where the reference is *mediate* or *indirect* and travels throughout chains of reference among symbols (Goodman 1984: 62; Goodman & Elgin 1988: 42). Having sketched the main aspects of Goodman's symbol systems, I will focus on how aesthetic symbol systems, by virtue of how they function, can make and highlight connections, thus organizing the world. Aesthetic symbolic worldmaking is conceived by Goodman as a practice where «the artist or writer grasps fresh and significant relationships and devises means for making them manifest», which «may bring out neglected likenesses and differences, force unaccustomed associations, and in some measure *remake our world*» (Goodman, 1976: 32-33). It is due to this capacity of remaking our world, which certainly resonates with Noë's notion of artistic practices as reorganizational, and to the important and lasting effects of aesthetic symbolic worldmaking that it «makes a genuine contribution to knowledge» (Goodman, 1976: 33). Such worldmaking is enacted within the framework of specific symbolic schemes, which operate when art is, and which can be hinted at by the five symptoms of the aesthetic.

Among the different ways of worldmaking, the aesthetic constitutes a particular way which affords us the possibility of aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic symbolic

³⁷ The building stones of symbolic systems are marks, inscriptions, characters and symbolic schemes. A *mark* is a potential symbol vehicle, it is something which can be seen, heard, smelt, felt, uttered or done. When a mark's potentiality to serve as the vehicle for a symbolic reference is actualized, it becomes an *inscription*. An inscription is a mark which has been symbolically charged with a referent, it "stands for" something else than itself. In Peircean terms, an inscription is a token for some symbolic type. Each inscription *refers to* a character, the symbolic type. The set of characters of a symbolic system constitute the *symbolic scheme*. At the same time, characters have a correspondent class of objects which constitute their compliance class.

worldmaking is not defined by Goodman as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, but he does provide a set of ‘symptoms’ for the aesthetic that can be used as hints for us to tell when the aesthetic is occurring. The event of the aesthetic is characterized by the operation of a symbolic system which organizes experience under such conditions. These aesthetic symbolic systems can be singled out by symptoms which establish what kind of symbolization constitutes functioning as a work of art. In *When is art*, Goodman provides the following five symptoms of the aesthetic:

(1) *syntactic density*, where the finest differences in certain respects constitute a difference between symbols – for example, an ungraduated mercury thermometer as contrasted with an electronic digital-read-out instrument; (2) *semantic density*, where symbols are provided for things distinguished by the finest differences in certain respects – for example, not only the ungraduated thermometer again but also ordinary English, though it is not syntactically dense; (3) *relative repleteness*, where comparatively many aspects of a symbol are significant – for example, a single-line drawing of a mountain by Hokusai where every feature of shape, line, thickness, etc. counts, in contrast with perhaps the same line as a chart of daily stock market averages, where all that counts is the height of the line above the base; (4) *exemplification*, where a symbol, whether or not it denotes, symbolizes as serving as a sample of properties it literally or metaphorically possesses; and finally (5) *multiple and complex reference*, where a symbol performs several integrated and interacting referential functions, some direct and some mediated through other symbols. (Goodman, 1978: 67-68, my emphasis)

Goodman’s quintet of aesthetic symptoms may be more intelligible when put in contrast with his previous development of a theory of notation in *Languages of Art* (Goodman, 1976). In the chapter dedicated to characterizing notational symbol systems, Goodman provides five requirements for notation which are in sharp contrast with aesthetic symbol systems. The requirements of a notation are (i) syntactic disjointness and (ii) syntactic finite differentiation; (iii) unambiguity; (iv) semantic disjointness and (v) semantic finite differentiation. Notational symbol systems comply with the conditions of syntactic disjointness and finite differentiation. Syntactic disjointness means that each mark belongs to one and only one character. The relationship between the notational scheme and application that obtains is that of «*character indifference* among the instances of each character» (Goodman, 1976: 132). Character-indifference consists of an equivalence-relation among the many instances of a character. Two marks are character indifferent if each is an inscription assigned to the same characters in a system of symbols as the other. The characters, as classes, must be disjoint so that no mark may belong to more than one character. Contrastingly, in aesthetic symbolic systems, classes of

characters may be joint, so that a mark performs complex and multiple references to different characters. While the syntactic requirements of disjointness and finite differentiation obtain in alphabetical, numerical, binary, and basic musical notations; aesthetic symbolic schemes are syntactically dense schemes:

A scheme is syntactically dense if it provides for infinitely many characters so ordered that between each two there is a third. In such a scheme, our second requirement [syntactic finite differentiation] is violated everywhere: no mark can be determined to belong to one rather than to many other characters. (Goodman, 1976: 136-137)

This density is manifested in the importance of detail in any aesthetic experience. It is in virtue of such detail that encounters with artworks are characterized by a feeling of inexhaustibility: no mark, line, color, gesture, texture can be determined to only one character, excluding the others, and for this reason each mark affords a myriad of hermeneutical possibilities.³⁸

The last consideration is that symbols within an aesthetic symbol system *function* differently than a symbol within a notational system in terms of semantic significance. In the aesthetic there is a semantic density and repleteness that is in line with Dewey's notion of *saturation* in an aesthetic experience. While in notational systems there is a limit to what is deemed as significant difference, in semantically dense symbolic schemes, such as the aesthetic, there is «an infinite number of characters with compliance-classes so ordered that between each two there is a third» (Goodman, 1976: 153), so that there is a theoretical infinite possibility of distinction in detail so that new compliance-cases emerge inexhaustibly. This *ad infinitum* progress is because aesthetics symbols do not refer to general and universal things that are simplified and depleted of its complication and contradictions, but rather aesthetics symbols are provided for «things distinguished by the finest difference» (Goodman, 1978: 68). A nonlinguistic pictorial scheme is dense because «every difference in every pictorial respect makes a difference under our familiar system of representation» (Goodman, 1976: 227). Such semantic density is coupled in the aesthetic with a relative repleteness of the symbol that contrasts with what Goodman denominates *attenuation* (Goodman, 1976: 230), that is, the deflated semantic charge of

³⁸ As it will be shown, the syntactic and semantic characteristics of aesthetic symbol schemes as *dense* and *replete*, will find their mirror image when examining the reorganizational potential of aesthetics from the standpoint of experience, with Dewey's notion of aesthetic experience as *saturated* and *complex*.

symbols which belong to a notational system. Whereas notational symbols have a limited set of significant aspects, in aesthetic symbols many aspects are significant. To follow Goodman's example: «a single-line drawing of a mountain by Hokusai where every feature of shape, line, thickness, etc. counts, in contrast with perhaps the same line as a chart of daily stock market averages, where all that counts is the height of the line above the base» (Goodman, 1978: 68). The line in the chart functions as a symbol within a notational system because it has been simplified and depleted of many of its elements – such as thickness, color, texture – which are not significant in the notational scheme. It has been deflated, expropriated of many of its attributes for the sake of clarity and conciseness. All the other aspects are *attenuated* so that the significant characteristic can stand out when encountering the chart. Antithetically, the line of the Hokusai mountain functioning within an aesthetic symbol system preserves all its aspects: «any thickening or thinning of the line, its color, its contrast with the background, its size, even the qualities of the paper – none of these is ruled out, none can be ignored» (Goodman, 1976: 229) – not even who, when and where draw it, and the environmental conditions of the perceiver who is encountering the work. Symbols in pictorial schemes are relatively replete because our interactions with these symbols potentially call attention to all of their features, enabling a kind of experience which affords the appreciation of every element as significant.

After analyzing the reorganizational agency of aesthetic experiences from the standpoint of the tactics of how aesthetic symbol systems work, I would like to focus on the conditions of possibility for the *beholder* to take part in such a transformational dimension of the aesthetic.³⁹ As the human bodymind taking part in this encounter, the beholder is the one that inhabits a world structured by many layers of worldmaking that organize the activities of the living community they are part of. At the same time, they have a particular kind of interdependent agency which enables them to transform to some extent – to displace, at least – such activities. In order to clarify this proposal, it is worth

³⁹ I adopt here the terminology of 'beholder' developed by Ken Wilder in *Beholding: Situated Art and the Aesthetics of Reception*, where he proposes the term 'beholder' as a non-Ocularcentric alternative to denominations like 'viewer' and 'spectator'. Wilder notes how 'beholder' «suggests an active process of beholding – an *act* of beholding – that demands something of the receiver or recipient, whose orientation towards the work (in its deepest sense) is thus brought into play ... my emphasis is on the artwork's functioning as an event- like rather than an object- like entity» (Wilder, 2020: 7).

bringing up Alva Noë's theory of action in perception, which dismantles the idea of bodyminds as dualistic entities with separated faculties that *either* passively perceive *or* act, and extends the category of action to a broader scope that encompasses feeling and perceiving as indiscernible in practice (Noë, 2004). Noë examines further how such action in perception takes place within aesthetic practice and experience in his later work *Strange Tools* (2015), where he argues that encounters with artworks transcend habitual ways of doing and inaugurate a distance that enables us to reflect upon the current ways of such organization of our activities.

What kind of beholder do we need to argue that Disability Justice artistic practices can be reorganizational experiences that transform our way of being in the world through the alteration of the habitual sensory regime we are immersed in? From the standpoint of the beholder, for such a non-causal but conditional relationship to be possible, we need a beholder whose perception, cognition and action are not separated processes, but rather interconnected embodied circuits in such a way that *altering one of them affects the others* in a significant way. Disability Justice artistic practices are guided by the idea that the embodied dimension and the lived experiences of the body generate a kind of knowledge through the senses, which can inform political transformation towards an organization of bodyminds that make future disabled lives sustainable. Embodied knowledge has been hinted at by enactivist conceptions of the continuum between action, perception and cognition.⁴⁰ In the philosophy of perception, Alva Noë's enactivism is conceptualized in *Action in Perception* (Noë, 2004), where it is argued that perception depends on our implicit understanding of patterns of co-dependence between sensory stimulation and bodily movement. Therefore, perceived properties (*p-properties*) are real and objective but relational because they depend on the interaction between the object, the environmental conditions and the location of the perceiver's body. If we are able to achieve coherence and constancy in perception, it is due to our capacity of discovering an order or pattern in appearances, which arises out of our skillful exploration combined with sensorimotor knowledge of our movements (Noë, 2004: Chapter 5). Perceptual

⁴⁰The enactivist proposal follows the tradition of Dewey's *Art as Experience*, which in its moment constituted a radical broadening of the scope of aesthetic experience beyond encounters with Art in museum and gallery environments. Dewey's contribution will be examined below, a choice made due to the weight of the notion of *experience* in classical American Pragmatism.

experience is always enacted. As Noë puts it, «to perceive is not merely to have sensory stimulation. It is to have sensory stimulation one understands» (Noë, 2004: 181). This does not necessarily imply an over-intellectualized theory of perception where our perceptions are theory-laden, by ‘understanding’ here Noë appeals to a sensorimotor understanding, a knowledge of our sensorimotor skills. Noë regards this comprehension in sensorimotor terms as skills which constitute some kind of knowledge due to they are responsible for my capacity to gain access to the world by virtue of a comprehension of the possession of practical skills and implicit mastery of my body and my movements.

In his theory of aesthetics, which is framed within a wider theory on human practice, Noë establishes a distinction between what he calls *level 1 activities*, and *level 2 activities* (my emphasis). *Level 1 activities* are organized practices that shape human communities, our way of thinking, seeing, paying attention, doing. These have three types of functions: social, biological and personal. I will put forward an example different from the ones provided by Noë. Think about washing your hands. It has a social function, because of the social value of cleanliness, good manners, purity, aesthetics and its attached status and prestige. Its biological function is to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and its personal function is to protect myself from such infections and to improve my self-esteem by having a clean image of my body (Goudsblom, 1986; Corbin, 1988). Washing your hands is a level 1 activity, like talking, driving, tying your shoes, and dancing. A different kind of practices are *level 2 activities*. Rather than organized activities, they are reorganizational ones. Noë’s main contrasting pair is that of dancing-choreography. Choreography is not dancing: choreography sheds light on the structure of dancing, puts it on stage and focuses on how dancing works and how it can be re-organized. As Noë puts it, in level 2 activities «the nature of the organization at the lower level gets put on display and. investigated» (Noë 2015, 29): thus, opening new possibilities of arrangement and ways to *re-organize* the lower-level ones. Like choreography, art is also a level 2 activity: whereas technological practices are organized and do now question the structures of living communities, artistic practice shed light and put on display the organizational ways of human action and therefore question them and open ways of re-articulating, re-organizing them. It is due to this challenging nature that works of art appear to us as what Noë calls *strange tools*. They do not serve our aims because their role is precisely to question these ends. In contrast with tools that help us in

our organized level 1 activities, strange tools make organized tasks uneasy (Noë 2015: 49-71). Close to artistic practices, philosophy is a level 2 activity as well. Philosophy investigates, illuminates and questions critically our ways of organization in different domains such as ethics, politics, science, and reasoning (Noë 2015: 28-30).

I argue that level 2 activities, reorganizational practices, take place in a borderland which is in touch with embodied living communities, and simultaneously which a symbolic dimension – from this interstice, such activities have the privilege of displacing and affecting both. Artistic practices, and in particular Access Art practices such as those of Carmen Papalia, Fayen d’Eve or Georgina Kleege, take place precisely in this reorganizational borderland. That is, they need to resort to or generate an array of symbolic resources in order to shed light on the structure of our organized communities and therefore be able to open up new ways of reorganizing them. For example, the process of choreographing needs a notation that enables such “dance writing” and that can be interpreted to result in a staged ensemble. That is, some symbolic resources need to be generated to transcend and distance ourselves from level 1 practices – it is this generation that takes place from the interstice between embodied experience and symbolic articulation what I will call symbolic worldmaking. This symbolic dimension inaugurates a crafted layer that recognizes how our perception (and that includes our proprioception and our experience of our own bodies) can and must be distinguished with what Noë calls wild seeing. It is worth noting that Noë’s use of ‘seeing’ should not lead us to think that wild seeing is restricted to visual perception, because for his enactive approach visual perception cannot be separate from bodily engagement with the environment – visual perception is constructed by the organism’s ongoing active exploration of the scene (O’Regan and Noë. 2001) where there is a radical intimacy of mind, body, world and action. The sensorimotor approach of enactivism argues that perception depends on the agent’s knowledge of sensorimotor patterns, and it can only be enacted through skilled sensorimotor activity informed by this knowledge (Noë 2004: 67). Sensorimotor enactivism emerged as a radical philosophical movement that pointed out the shortcomings of Varela, Thompson and Rosch’s (1991) embodied cognition and took the notion of cognitive extension further (Clark, 2000, 2008; Dennet, 1991; Matthen, 2005; and Pettit, 2003). For our current purposes we may define Noë’s wild seeing as an all-encompassing activity of an embodied agent embedded in its surroundings and acting

skillfully and is not limited to a compartmentalized view of visual perception. Noë characterizes wild seeing as follows:

Wild seeing is active, embedded, subordinated to task, an openness to our world rather than, if you like, a state of reflection on or contemplation of the world. Most seeing, most of the time, is precisely not contemplative; not, in any sense, aesthetic. It does not rest on deliberate acts of looking and inspection. We drive, we tie our shoes, we prepare dinner and then we eat it. And we use our eyes and our other senses when we do all this. Wild seeing is spontaneous and engaged; it is direct and involved. Wild seeing is acting in concert with the stuff around us. Aesthetic seeing, in contrast, is something more like the entertainment of thoughts about what one is looking at. (Noë 2015: 51-52)

In contrast with wild seeing, which is an organized activity that responds to contextual, biological and personal functions, Noë defines aesthetic seeing as a re-organizational activity that enables some kind of distancing from wild seeing: «Aesthetic seeing, in contrast, is something more like the entertainment of thoughts about what one is looking at» (Noë 2015: 55). This «entertainment of thoughts» that take place in aesthetic seeing is triggered by the strange tools, the artworks, that act as a springboard for reflection. The content of this reflection can be complex and problematic, as Amelia Jones has argued in *Seeing Differently* (2012), where she develops how in the visual arts there is a history and an operating theory of identification that needs to reconceive difference if it is to abandon a binary concept of identity that is no longer working in contemporary's thought intersectional post-identities (Jones 2012: 20-22; 122-125). I argue that aesthetic seen can also act as a coupler to an overlapping symbolic dimension as defined in the section on Goodman above – an aesthetic worldmaking field of action that governs how a human living community organizes its activity, thought and affects.

4. Radically experimental: the politics of aesthetic experience in John Dewey

If we are to conceive of aesthetic encounters, defined as an embodied encounter with the artwork which inaugurates new sensory regimes due to a non-causal reorganizational potential, we need to formulate such embodied (and perceptual) encounter as connected to experience and our way of being-in-the-world in an appropriate way. To examine what are the conditions of possibility for such encounters from the standpoint of experience, I will move on to John Dewey's conception of experience.⁴¹ Although such category is

⁴¹ Experience and its significance for aesthetics, education and politics is also vital in Jane Addams' philosophy. I will, however, develop this further in the section on the leadership of the most impacted in

indeed central in Dewey, its centrality permeates the Pragmatist tradition in a more embracing way. Pratt connects classical Pragmatism's interest in «the lived experience of a pluralistic society in which a diversity of groups, interests, and ideas could coexist» (Pratt, 2002: xvi) to the double cradle of American Pragmatism, which emerges from both European and Native influences and is materialized in four commitments, which Pratt defines as «interaction, pluralism, community, and growth» (Pratt, 2002: xiv). According to the commitment to interaction, the embodied engagement and perception that takes place when beholders encounter an artwork will not be conceived as a separated complex cognitive operation. This already entails a determinate position towards one of the main philosophical problems, which constitutes a red thread across history from Greek philosophy and scholastics to contemporary epistemology: the mind-body problem. While the archaeology of touch across the landmark territories that have shaped our contemporary distribution of the senses in Western society in the previous chapter has shown the fine-grained tinges lost in the over-simplified narrative of the rout of the body at length, now we need to advance our operational stance towards the mind-body problem which will be provided by our standpoint in Pragmatism and Critical Phenomenology. To do so, the continuity of perception and cognition in John Dewey will be examined as a precedent to the conception of the mind as embedded, extended, enactive, and embodied (Newen, De Bruin & Gallagher, 2018; Durt, Fuchs & Tewes, 2017) that enables us to consider aesthetic experience as active and multisensorial, dismantling Ocularcentric discourses that deem it passive, contemplative and disengaged.

This continuity of mind and body, of perception and cognition, breaks down the hierarchical psychology of faculties, which since the birth of Aesthetics as an academic discipline with Baumgarten had established aesthetics as a form of sensible *knowledge*, nevertheless inferior to reason. From Dewey's pragmatic paradigm, perception and cognition are located in a continuum of experiences that involves an embodied agent embedded in an environment. Setting out from the ecological paradigm of Darwinism, Dewey conceived of the individual as an organism evolving and adapting as a continuous response to its environment, an interaction he designated as *transaction*. Organisms-in-

Chapter III, since the modes of governance enacted at Hull House will have a role in the assessment of Disability Justice principles as shaping Access Art practice, rather than in establishing the more conceptual framework that concerns us here.

environments in active adaptation amidst a living context are inexorably embedded and embodied. From this pragmatist standpoint, Dewey criticized traditional metaphysical dualisms that reified the extremes of the continuum of experience, such as mind and body, cognition and perception, and reason and emotion.⁴² Concerning cognition, Dewey tore down the compartmentalized psychology of faculties, paradigmatically developed by Kant but which had persisted until Dewey's contemporaries. Instead, he rearticulated the faculties and the qualitatively different experiences as part of a larger continuity. Reason and sensibility are bind together because reasoning and the acquisition of propositional knowledge is not performed by an abstract purely rational agent, outside of the world, but rather as David Hildebrand puts it, an activity

among the ways organisms with evolved capacities for thought and language cope with problems. Minds, then, are not passively observing the world; rather, they are actively adapting, experimenting, and innovating. (Hildebrand, 2020)

The continuity of sensibility and reason within the organism-in-an-environment entails, consequently, tearing down the wall between an inferior and underdeveloped prelinguistic and pre-logic sense, and discursively articulated knowledge. Both activities are strategies of the living being to cope with its surroundings and reestablish a balance with it as an active response to adapt to the constant changes and conflicts that the environment poses to them. This reconstruction of a larger continuity is transposed to the realm of aesthetics mainly concerning education and the major role of the arts and the cultivation of taste when educating children who are to be active and critical individuals belonging to a democratic society (Dewey 1925, 1976[1916], 1981[1930]). In fact, Dewey locates the museum as the center in his diagram of the ideal school (Costantino 2004: 399-417), which would synthesize the arts and sciences in education, breaking down traditional disciplinary boundaries. The chief role of aesthetics in education is a trend that was followed by later Pragmatism in the philosophy of education, most notably by Maxine Greene, who developed the concept of *aesthetic education* characterized as

an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be

⁴² Dewey's criticism of dualism is further developed by Patricia Hill Collins' critique of «the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought» (Collins, 1991: 225). But although both of them will defend a nuanced understanding of complexities and remark the areas of indeterminacy that either/or dichotomies erase, while Dewey's thought establishes *continuities*, Collins unearths rather *intersections*.

noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. (Greene 2001: 6)⁴³

However, here we will focus on Dewey's late aesthetics as developed in *Art as Experience*, published in 1934, where his general theory of the continuum of experience is applied to aesthetic experience. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey defends that artworks' conditions of origin and operation are embedded in experience, and its significance is dismantled when art is separated from the material realm that embodied agents inhabit. For the purposes of this research, Dewey will be a source to examine how *experience* can be understood to account for Disability Justice practices that broaden the notion of aesthetic experience towards multisensory engagements that are imbued with a reorganizational character. Furthermore, the centrality of experience *not only* in Dewey's aesthetics, but also in his political and educational philosophy, will make the case for the continuity between such realms – a continuity shared with Rancière's argument for aesthetics' potential for drawing lines that cross borders between disciplines and challenge the distribution of the sensible.

4.1. Sensory articulation and social distributions

An overly underexplored theme in Dewey's aesthetics – which is central to this research's aim to establish a broader epistemology that takes into account the neglected sense of touch – is his analysis of how the establishment of the *beaux-arts* and how it confines aesthetic experience inside the walls of the museum is linked to nationalism and colonialism. That is, whereas for the Greeks the arts are part of the surrounding elements of a living context, and even in the Middle Ages the relation to the icon is embedded in everyday experience, the birth of European museums segregates aesthetic experience to a different realm. Together with the development of aesthetics as a discipline in the second half of the eighteenth century, the arts are overintellectualized and separated from its original potential of intensifying lived experience. It is worth noting that Dewey wrote *Art as Experience* in 1932, when his contemporary, sociologist and also pragmatist, W.E.B. Dubois had already established himself as a major intellectual figure both in the United States and in France. Dubois, the first African American to earn a doctorate in

⁴³ I have developed the experiential dimension of Maxine Greene's aesthetic education in further detail elsewhere (Perez Casanovas, 2022).

Harvard, and a leading figure in the Civil Rights movement and Pan-Africanism, had published his major work *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, and just around that time had just written *Africa: Its Place in Modern History* (1930). Together with Dubois and Jane Addams, John Dewey was a cofounder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909 (Fischer, 2009: 442). In the thirties, Dewey would be approached again by Dubois, who on January 12, 1932 wrote to Dewey asking «if you would not send a Message to the colored people through THE CRISIS magazine» pointing how «we have had Messages from Gandhi, Tagore, Jane Addams, and numbers of other leaders» (Dubois, 1932; Fig.11), a petition Dewey answered promptly on January 20. In a context heavily loaded with racial consciousness, and given Dewey's commitment to the civil rights movement activism, it is understandable that he included the following analysis of the segregation of aesthetic experience:

Most European museums are, amongst other things, *memorials of the rise of nationalism and imperialism*. Every capital must have its own museum of painting, sculpture, etc., devoted in part to exhibiting the greatness of its artistic past, and, in other part, to exhibiting the loot gathered by its monarchs in conquest of other nations; for instance, the accumulations of the spoils of Napoleon that are in the Louvre. *They testify to the connection between the modern segregation of art and nationalism and militarism.* (Dewey 1980[1934]: 8, my emphasis)

Dewey continues to argue that the development of the museum is also linked to the growth of capitalism and the rise of the *nouveaux riches*' desire to set themselves apart from the common life. Therefore, Dewey is already pointing towards an idea that will be developed at length by media aesthetics at the end of the twentieth century: the articulation of the senses and of environments that afford aesthetic experiences corresponds to a political distribution of time and space.⁴⁴ Artworks are confined to museums, where they would be scientifically catalogued and rationally organized, and afterwards displayed for the eye of the visitor (Bennet 2011: 263-281). The eye and nothing else, because “Do Not Touch” is the first commandment in the newborn museum (Classen, 2017). This material confinement corresponds to a desire to underscore and

⁴⁴ This aspect enables us to dig deeper into Dewey's connection to Rancière's *partage du sensible*, not only due to the shared premise of continuity between aesthetic experience and the political distribution of bodies and affects, but also due to a striking common interest in how this distribution leaves out and oppresses racialized bodyminds. In Rancière, the colonialist dynamics entrenched in the distribution of the sensible and the appearance of consensus are mainly developed in *Disagreement*, where he argues that there is an «absolute, prepolitical hate» imbricated in the sensory regime, where «the figure of the other is exaggerated» to justify exclusion and a desire for elimination (Rancière, 1998: 119).

reinforces two ideological separations which have real and geopolitical effects in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe: the national border giving rise to nationalism, and the separation of the civilized European society from the '*sauvages*' of the colonies.⁴⁵

January 12, 1932.

Professor John Dewey,
Columbia University,
New York, N. Y.

My dear Mr. Dew

12-23-1
I am venturing to ask you again if you would not send a Message to the colored people through THE CRISIS magazine? We are publishing this month an encouraging word from Einstein and we have had Messages from Gandhi, Tagore, Jane Addams, and numbers of other leaders.

I should be very glad if you would write on any subject you may wish, but perhaps most timely would be something on the political situation. You realize our dilemma in New York. The only party that has paid any attention to the needs and demands of black Harlem has been Tammany. The reformers, every time they have come in have ignored us, and the republicans steadily ignore us. Now, under circumstances like this, should an honest man who has no illusions about Tammany do with his vote?

I shall be glad to hear from at your convenience.

Very sincerely yours,

W.E.B./DW

Fig.11 Letter from W. E. B. Dubois to John Dewey, January 12, 1932. W. E. B. Dubois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

⁴⁵ On the effects on bodyminds of these either/or ideological separations, I want to call attention to two contemporary standpoints. On civilization and rationality, Paget Henry has examined in depth the connections between Western reason and African thought, and how they shaped Pan-Africanism as an appropriation of a mixed heritage into an intersectional philosophy that takes into account how race and class determine possible modes of subjectivity (Henry, 2000). Performing a similar move, Chiara Brambilla is developing a philosophy of borderspaces that transforms our way of thinking about borders, from «a static, line-based, and state-centric interpretation» into «a site of generative struggles where alternative subjectivities and agencies could be shaped» (Brambilla & Jones, 2020: 288-289).

4.2. Virtues of Dewey's emphasis on experience

Dewey's aesthetics gives a central role to aesthetic experience, providing a qualitative definition of *an experience*, which he develops in the third chapter of *Art and Experience*, 'Having an Experience'. This centrality provides a solid standpoint for us to account for the relational and agential of aesthetic experience as a processual event of co-creation in Disability Justice's Access Art practices. Dewey defines *an experience* in contrast with merely experiencing things. *An experience* is characterized by a unifying quality which enables us to individualize the self-sufficient experience from the stream of experiences. Additionally, in such an experience «the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment», so there is a completeness connected to the notion of an experience (Dewey 1980[1934]: 35). Due to this completion, an experience is a situation or episode that we can recall saying «that *was* an experience» because of its unity and individualizing quality. It is integrated within at demarcated in the general stream of experience by a particular wholesomeness. Having a meal in Paris or having an argument with a loved one constitute examples of an experience. In such experiences, we can distinguish different parts or phases which do not diminish their unity, but instead «the enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases on its varied colors» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 36). Dewey quickly turns to what constitutes having an aesthetic experience. Works of art are paradigmatic examples of *an experience*. When experiencing an artwork, «different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear and lose their own character as they do so» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 136). An aesthetic experience has a unity in virtue of a quality that pervades the entire experience. Dewey is unclear as to what is this pervasive quality that accounts for the unity of aesthetic experience, but I will try to elucidate it by providing an adverbial characterization which resorts to previous sections of *Art as Experience*.

In 'Ethereal things', Dewey characterizes aesthetic experience as a saturation, complexity and minuteness of differentiation – therefore, the qualities of an aesthetic experience mirror the characteristics of aesthetic symbol systems according to Goodman, in particular semantic density and relative repleteness, examined when we were situated from the standpoint of symbol systems. For Dewey, in aesthetic experience we direct our attention towards details. This detailed perception is accompanied by phenomenological

metamorphoses in the experience of spaces and time. In line with a Rancièrian reorganization of time and space in the politics of aesthetics (Rancière, 2023: 23), Dewey argues that in aesthetic experience *space* ceases to be a void with points of danger, pain and pleasure – a ‘dotted’ space – and becomes a comprehensive and enclosed ‘scene’ (Dewey 1980[1934]: 23). Such scene is constituted by a multiplicity of ordered doings and affects for the living agent. *Time* is neither an endless and uniform flow, nor a succession of heterogeneous instantaneous points; it becomes a rhythm. This rhythmic continuum is a flow of expectant impulses, movements of retraction and projection, intervals of pause, moments of growth and fulfillment. In aesthetic experience, space and time gain a qualitative dimension that it does not have in the non-aesthetic. As a result, it gives rise to

more opportunities for resistance and tension, more drafts upon experimentation and invention, and therefore novelty in action, greater range and depth of insight and increased poignancy in feeling. (Dewey 1980[1934]: 23)

Notice that such outcomes are not substantial, but rather adverbial, i.e., what characterizes aesthetic experience is a transformation in our *ways* of doing things: we act *experimentally* and *inventively*, we judge *deeply*, we feel *intensely*. It is this adverbial quality that enables Dewey to transfer his conception of *an* aesthetic experience into other realms as varied as ethics, politics, and cognition – affirming that «intellectual experience must bear an esthetic stamp to be itself complete» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 38). The aesthetic is part of different ranges of the spectrum of experience, since it is defined as «the clarified and intensified development of traits that belong to every normally complete experience» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 46). To touch upon Dewey’s understanding of aesthetic experience, it is useful to consider what is understood by its contrary, the non-esthetic. The non-esthetic, he says, «lies within two limits» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 40): the loose succession of a uniform flow, and the proceeding from mechanically connected parts. In contrast with rhythm, we find an ever-homogeneous flow with no differentiation; and confronting episodes and parts which constitute a unity, we find mechanically connected parts which bear no relation to the whole. Therefore, the enemies of the esthetic are «the humdrum; slackness of loose ends; submission to convention in practice and intellectual procedure» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 40).

Finally, whereas mechanical non-aesthetic perfection can be attained by a machine, aesthetic experience denotes also *affectively* marked experience: the process is ‘loving’, in the sense that the agent «must care deeply for the subject matter» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 48). Such affective attitude constitutes the emotion that guides the organization and selection within aesthetic experience, that in turn marks its rhythm and process. The quality that rounds out an aesthetic experience as complete and united is characterized by Dewey as ‘emotional’ (Dewey 1980[1934]: 41). The emotion attached to the experience gives it its qualitative unity, however, it is important to note that such emotion is not an external addendum to the experience, but rather constitutive. As Dewey puts it, emotion, cognition, sensory perception and action should be understood as an imbricated network and not as separate operations that can be psychologically compartmentalized:

experience is emotional but there are no separate things called emotions in it (...) emotions are attached to events and objects in their movement. They are not, save in pathological instances, private. And even an ‘objectless’ emotion demands something beyond itself to attach itself (...) Emotion is the moving and cementing force. It selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. (Dewey 1980[1934]: 42)⁴⁶

Consequentially, Dewey provides a notion of an aesthetic experience that is characterized by a unifying quality, and since this quality consists of the way an experience takes place, it will be an adverbial quality. Aesthetic experience is not limited to the art in the museums, but rather can occur in the experiences of everyday life if encounters in this field are enacted in an aesthetic way. “The aesthetic way” – and this is crucial for this research - *consists of a saturated, complex, and detailed way of experiencing, where space becomes a scene and time is phenomenologically perceived as rhythmic, within the frame of an affective and caring engagement.*

In this dissertation, Dewey’s proposal operates from the standpoint of aesthetic experience how encounters with artworks can trigger in some way a reorganization of the sensible fabric in a political event as defined by Rancière. But we need to limit the scope

⁴⁶ According to this passage, emotion is a kind of setting or fabric that opens and orders an experience, unifying it qualitatively and providing a guiding force in a saturated environment, in a way very similar to Heidegger’s *Stimmung* as a «disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us» (Heidegger, 1962[1927]: 177).

of Dewey's aesthetic according to the previous standpoints examined – that is, the reorganizational aesthetic symbol systems drawing on Goodman, and the human bodyminds who enter into this transactional encounter. Rather than establishing experiences involving aesthetic symbol systems as the primal domain of aesthetic experiences, Dewey defends the primacy of aesthetic features of natural environments. In experiencing nature, humans feel a form of communion, a harmony between the living being and the environment, that intensifies such experience with the upmost vitality. It is this intensification that, for Dewey, constitutes an aesthetic experience. For us, appreciation of nature and of our surroundings will be considered rather as a consequence of having aesthetic encounters with artworks, that is, as part of the new sensory regime that emerges in a non-direct causal way from aesthetic experience.⁴⁷ This environmental dimension will become especially relevant when examining how the Disability Justice principle of sustainability governs Access Arts practices.

Likewise, for Dewey, activities involving manual labor such as mechanics can constitute instances of aesthetic experiences. He does not only argue for the continuity of aesthetic qualities from everyday life to encounters with High Art, but for the primacy of the former over the latter, claiming that such primal aesthetic experiences «in the raw» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 4) are the basis for more complex sources of the aesthetic. His vindication of a continuity between «the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 3) is illustrated through the non-hierarchical metaphor of everyday events being the substratum for complex aesthetic experiences: «Mountain peaks do not float unsupported; they do not even just rest upon the earth. They *are* the earth in one of its manifest operations» (Dewey 1980[1934]: 3). That is, works of art (i.e., mountain peaks) do not only need everyday experience as their basis, but they are also everyday experiences in a particular manifestation, that is, there is a continuity between one and the other. In another

⁴⁷ Our approach here is thus similar to Ecologic Aesthetics as developed by Beatriz Salazar Duque, who follows Paul Gobster's affective-cognitive theory in arguing that Ecologic Aesthetics aims to connect aesthetic experiences to a better understanding and sensibility towards ecological aspects of the environment and landscape (Salazar Duque, 2020). This involves both knowledge and affects, to «better interpret the meaning of ecological processes and the functions of landscapes so that they can contribute to their appreciation and protection» (Gobster, 2008: 306).

paramount example offered by Dewey, he points out how mechanics can also constitute an aesthetic experience:

The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged. (...) Oftentimes the product may not appeal to the esthetic sense of those who use the product. The fault, however, is oftentimes not so much with the worker as with the conditions of the market for which his product is designed. (Dewey 1980[1934]: 5)

Although the mechanic's task can be aesthetic insofar it is an *engaged* activity where interest, care and affection are involved; for us, it does not comply with the reorganization characteristics put forward when examining the kind of activities an agent develops in aesthetic experiences. Going back to Nöe, the mechanic's task is a level 1 activity that organizes human activity, but it is not transformational or reorganizational. We may say it follows the distribution of roles, occupations and places but it does not constitute a site of dissent and therefore lacks the politics of aesthetics.⁴⁸ But, as the passage we are analyzing already point out, the encounter with the product may not arise aesthetic experiences for its users. Why is this the case? Dewey attributes this failure in triggering such experiences to capitalist marketing.

4.3. From experience to gesture: do new readings of Dewey in Somaesthetics and Pragmatism do the trick?

It has been shown how a Deweyan understanding of aesthetic experience can set the ground for such experiences as reorganizational political events that trigger an undoing and later redistribution of the sensory fabric. Lastly, I want to complement and further characterize such experience through the contemporary contributions of two philosophical proposals that provide (1) an emphasis on the epistemological value of such embodied aesthetic experience; and (2) a semiotic study on what tactics are deployed to afford such sense-making in aesthetic experience. These are, respectively, Richard Shusterman's Somaesthetics and Giovanni Maddalena's philosophy of gesture. If we turn our attention back to the original definition of Somaesthetics provided by Shusterman,

⁴⁸ It remains open whether it can constitute an other kind of aesthetic experience which is compliant and pleasurable but not politic; or even if it can indeed be political if the mechanic phenomenologically experiences their task in a dissensual way, for instance, taking advantage of the breaches in production and finding pleasure for example in the textures and haptic sensations afforded by materials and tools.

we find that epistemology and knowledge understood as a caring knowledge linked to traditions of *cura sui* is central to the field.⁴⁹ As Shusterman puts it in *Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal*:

Somaesthetics can be provisionally defined as the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning. It is therefore also devoted to the knowledge, discourses, practices, and bodily disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it. If we put aside traditional philosophical prejudice against the body and instead simply recall philosophy's central aims of knowledge, self-knowledge, right action, and its quest for the good life, then the philosophical value of Somaesthetics should become clear in several ways. (Shusterman, 1999: 302)

Shusterman continues to argue that Somaesthetics offers bodily practices that enable us to «correct the actual functional performance of our senses by an improved direction of one's body» (Shusterman, 1999: 302) so that knowledge can rely on sensory perception.⁵⁰ The definition hints at the potential of the body as a locus for the generation caring knowledge. At this point, we should ask ourselves: does Somaesthetics do the trick then? Can it be a framework that accounts for Disability Justice's Access Arts as an epistemological practice? I argue that some piece of the puzzle is missing, because Somaesthetics broadens the scope of aesthetic experience so much that it becomes unable to account for specific artistic practices and how they can constitute processes of sense-making in themselves. That is, as Giovanni Maddalena puts it: «the trouble is that he [Shusterman] does not technically explain how our body creates knowledge» (Maddalena, 2015: 87).

It is precisely in Maddalena's *The Philosophy of Gesture: Completing Pragmatists' Incomplete Revolution* (2015) that we can find, I argue, the missing link

⁴⁹ Shusterman has established the headquarters of Somaesthetics in the Center for Body, Mind, and Culture at the Boca Raton Campus of Florida Atlantic University. Most academic research on the field is published in the *Journal of Somaesthetics*, published at Aalborg University (Denmark). Somaesthetics has flourished significantly in South-Eastern Asian Universities that have a tendency towards philosophical bodily practices, as Shusterman notes how «recognition of somatic training as an essential means toward philosophical enlightenment lies at the heart of Asian practices of Hatha Yoga, Zen meditation, and T'ai chi ch'uan» (Shusterman, 1999:302).

⁵⁰ The promising somatic epistemology that Somaesthetics seemed to offer for Disability Justice seems to be compromised at this point, since Shusterman's wording of a «correct functional performance» and improvement of the body is dangerously close to the industrial medical complex discourse of rehabilitation and cure of disability. In particular, the notion of a correct functioning seems to comply with neurotypical normalcy and pathologize neurodiversity. However, there might be a silver lining in the original attention of Somaesthetics to the knowledges and bodily practices that structure somatic care.

between the corporeal dimension of Disability Justice's Access Art and their effective epistemological potential for sense-making and political reorganizational disruption. Maddalena's contribution to the debate of embodied knowledge is a «more precise semiotic study» (Maddalena, 2015: 88) that is based on an account of the creation of sense through 'complete gestures'. The philosophy of gesture has a two-fold contribution to the conceptualization of Access Art as sense-making practices. First, it provides a semiotic analysis of the generation of embodied knowledge and how can performative gestures create significations. Secondly, it enables us to distinguish between creativity broadly understood which can encompass all processes of meaning-making, *and* a creativity strictly understood which is restricted to artistic practices of meaning-making such as Access Art. Maddalena's classification differentiates gestures depending on the density of the blending of signs. It is worth quoting Maddalena's approach to creativity in length:

When we 'create' something we are always performing a determinate action. In the figures of the previous chapter, we have seen what an action can be when it is not determinate: ideation or projection from a phenomenological standpoint, imagination or modeling from a semiotic perspective. We refer to creation when we reach a determination through actual/existent actions. However, the action is not creative if it is not purposeful and is not a way to embody possibilities. Moreover, this embodiment of possibilities or determination of vagueness happens through dense relationships among the figuration of experience by icons, the precise referral to parts of experience by indices, and the openness to interpretation granted by symbols. In any creative action you can find these elements densely blended. This is evident for artistic creations such as paintings, music, writings, and sculptures, but it happens in the same way for scientific discoveries, and for everyday cases of creativity that can change our routine habits ... when we speak of creativity we usually think of a restricted sense of the word, namely of a special performance of this semiotic pattern. Complete gesture is this special performance that moves within a completely synthetic pattern of reasoning. Some questions follow from this discussion. Is every complete gesture creative? Or is any creation a complete gesture? I think that the implication works in both directions. If something is a complete gesture, it will be creative, originally synthetic; if something is creative, it has to be a complete gesture, and it will have this particular dense blending of phenomenological and semiotic characteristics. There remains a difference between any degree of syntheticity (creativity broadly understood) and complete syntheticity (creativity strictly understood) just as there is a difference between any incomplete and complete gesture. This difference is due to the density of the blending of signs. (Maddalena, 2015: 88-89)

How does Access Art perform complete gestures that create dense blending of things which in turn create new significant as embodied knowledge? I will develop this inquiry taking as a stepping-stone a very concrete creative gesture: that which materializes Fayen d'Evie's work *Reading 'Sequence' / Tactile Re-call* tactile paintings. D'Evie's work was shown for the first time at the Incinerator Gallery in Melbourne in

April, 2018, and it consists of an audio installation, resonators and tactile paintings which recall the memories of walking around Richard Serra's sculpture *Sequence*. If we pay attention to the tactile paintings, we can notice how they result from a very particular gesture: d'Evie carves in granite different lines that retrace the navigational paths of collaborator Georgina Kleege's white cane moving around *Sequence*. The hand carving in the granite stone materializes, as Maddalena puts it, a determination of vagueness that is charged with dense relationships, i.e., semantically dense relationships of complex reference to use Goodman's terminology. We can understand d'Evie's gesture as a strictly creative action because of the density of blending of the elements and the hermeneutical openness of its symbols: there is a mapping element of Kleege's navigation, the trace of d'Evie's hand, the indirect reference and semi-presence of Richard Serra's *Sequence*, and in the context of d'Evie's work a reference to proto-historical typographies through the media of the granite which reminds us, for instance, of totems and megaliths. This blending of elements unfolds as we explore the work in time, tracing the lines of the tactile paintings with our fingertips and listening to the audio recordings of Kleege's navigations (d'Evie and Kleege, 2018).

I argue that d'Evie's gesture, which can be expanded by analogy to similar gestures in Access Art, constitutes a disruption of the police distribution of the sensible insofar it materializes a possibility that was only abstractly imagined before. By creating a nonvisual typography or mapping of Georgina Kleege's navigation, it embodies a possibility for recording and remembering nonvisual forms of moving around the environment that constitute caring knowledge to the extent that they create new blendings of significant elements that *respond to nonvisual access needs*. This materialization of a possible nonvisual typography can be the trigger for questioning our caring habits within an Ocularcentric culture, asking who we are leaving behind.



Fig. 12 Georgina Kleege, dressed in black with white hair, navigates the steel sculpture *Sequence* by Richard Serra with her white cane to explore its potential gestures for Fayen d'Evie's piece *Reading 'Sequence' / Tactile Re-call* (2018). Photo credit: Hillary Goidell.



Fig. 13 *Reading 'Sequence' / Tactile Re-call* (2018), by Fayen d'Evie at the Incinerator Gallery, in Melbourne. Three tactile paintings made of stone retrace the navigation of Kleege around Serra's *Sequence*. Visitors were invited to touch the paintings while listening to the soundscape recordings *Wayfinding 'Sequence' / Vibrational Re-call* (2018) using the headphones connected to the tactile-paintings. Photo credit: Hillary Goidell.

Now, when focusing on the gesture as the performative creation of reorganizations of the fabric of the sensible in artistic practices, we have to be careful not to fall into narratives of what German art historian Martin Warnke (1937-2019) coined as the “intellectual supercharging of the hand”. Warnke explains how the intellectual supercharging of the hand is a phenomenon that traverses avant-garde movements and specially Surrealism. The discourse on the seeing and thinking hand can be extended as a *topos* of twentieth century art if we take into consideration the obsession Picasso, for many the greatest artist of the 20th century, had with the hands and even more with the artist’s hands – one only needs to skim through his notebooks to notice the pervasive presence of hand imagery. Martin Warnke argues that Surrealism focuses on the hand as a paradigmatic example of embodied knowledge, in such a way that the head is *in* the hand (Warnke, 1997). Notable examples of the intellectual supercharging of the hand in Surrealist circles are the publication of *Les mains libres* (1936-37) by Man Ray and Paul Éluard, the clandestine zine *La main à plume* (1941-44), and Focillon’s essay *In Praise of Hands* (1992[1942]). Picasso and Éluard collaborated with *La main à plume*, which published celebrated hymn for the French resistance *Liberté* during German occupation. Finally, in the conjoint publication by Gaston Bachelard and Albert Flocon, two engravings of the hand mark the frame of the text, opening and closing the volume (Rheinberger, 2018: 12-13).

However, the intellectual supercharging of the hand is a conflation of the hand, the head and the eye where the hand is completely erased. The hand is disembodied in such a way that the corporeal nature of gesture disappears because it is equated to thinking and seeing. This phenomenon may be the result of what Maddalena calls the great paradox of gesture: «The paradox is that a gesture is a kind of reasoning that should be and is performed, but words are the only way to talk about it» (Maddalena, 2015: 142). Moreover, it erases all the specificities, the time profile and the detail appreciation of the many senses of touch by modeling the artist’s hand movements on a photographic model of sight and a rational discursive model of thought.

5. What we talk about when we talk about Access Art

Until this chapter, this research has filled a gap in the bibliography on the philosophy of touch, which traces the value of touch in cultural cognition and aesthetics from the Greeks up to Modernity. Cultural cognition is defined by Yale Law School professor Dr. Dan Kahan (Kahan, 2012: 731) as the process through which we filter new information accordingly to our preferred vision of the good society. We accept the information that reinforces our cosmivision and we reject those threats which question our system of beliefs. This explains our strong emotional predisposition to reject any information that threatens our view of the world, and mainly our values of good and bad. Kahan uses cultural cognition to explain why many people deny climate change despite the scientific evidence presented to them, and here it results fruitful for the general refuse and evade disability arts and culture movements due to ableist phobias to fragmentation, dismemberment, and abjection (Kahan, 2012: 732). Since Disability Justice has already been introduction in the prologue of this work, I will first characterize what we mean by Access Art and how it is related to tactility through a conception of aesthetic experience as a shared embodied experience through the contributions of Tobin Siebers, which have been greatly endorsed by Access Art curators and practitioners (Cachia, 2017b).

5.1. Aesthetic experience from the standpoint of Complex Embodiment: Tobin Siebers' socio-somatic approach

Dewey's defense of a continuum of experience provided a definition of an aesthetic experience as a saturated, complex and detailed experience, where space becomes a scene and time becomes rhythm, in the frame of an affective and caring embodied engagement. As already foreshadowed by Dewey (1980 [1934]: 8), the organization of the senses and how we perceive is in a constant reciprocal relationship with the way we think. In the late nineteenth century, the seclusion of art to museums where visitors are conceived of as disembodied eyes that look was linked to ideas of Nationalism, xenophobia, intellectual purity, and Eurocentric canons. Therefore, in Modern Europe there is a link between such imperialist Eurocentrism and Ocularcentrism (Levin, 1993; Jay, 1994). Having established this relationship, the avant-garde artistic energies of the twentieth century should be seen not only as a vindication of a formalist break from the academicist canon,

but rather as performing an effective reorganization of the senses, where touch becomes central. Therefore, if artistic innovations are to be considered as conflating an over-reaching intellectual critical attitude towards European canons, they need to be reassessed considering the significance of material choices beyond vision.

Approaching artworks from the perspectives of touch means that we take a very particular standpoint: that of interacting with artworks as embodied agents in a contextual environment. Here, embodiment should be understood in the sense of complex embodiment as developed by Tobin Siebers. Complex embodiment overlaps the social, symbolic, and phenomenological dimensions of tactile experience in saying that one's own lived body is of course conditioned by social representations, while at the same time one cannot deny very real feelings such as pain, itchiness, or tiredness. Siebers thus brings together the phenomenological dimension of embodiment conceptualized mainly from Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the lived body (*Leib*), and simultaneously, the social and cultural dimension of embodiment that comes from Foucault's arguments on how sociohistorical contexts enable and prohibit different modes of subjectivation. As Tobin Siebers develops in *Disability Theory*,

The theory of complex embodiment views the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal. Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative. Social representations obviously affect the experience of the body. (Siebers, 2008: 25)

In our case, this becomes relevant to the extent that the perceptive experience and the embodied interaction with artworks will be obviously laden by overlapping considerations about gender, sexuality, the artist's biography, art history, and about the institutional spaces that host this interaction. In a way, embracing *complex embodiment* means that we undertake the task of historicizing phenomenology. However, taking into account the approach that has been outlined throughout this chapter, I propose a reformulation of Siebers's definition to accommodate the notion of artistic practices beyond a *mimetic*, representational paradigm onto a synesthetic embodied practice that performs a reorganizational worldmaking. From this standpoint, the theory of complex embodiment views the economy between *reorganizational practices of worldmaking such as artistic practices encountered by bodyminds in aesthetic experience* and the body

not as unidirectional as in the social model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal. Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its *symbolic systems of reorganizational worldmaking* as mutually transformative. Social *symbol systems of reorganizational worldmaking* obviously affect the experience of the body.

Touch is a manifold sense, its scope ranges from the most basic and elementary sensations to the most affectively significant interactions in domains such as the therapeutic, the erotic and the artistic. However, touch has been a liminal subject in philosophy, and it has only gained attention in recent pandemic years, with a rising interest for touch from both philosophies of the senses and political philosophy. To conclude this chapter, I would like to put forward how the argumentation above can account for Disability Justice creative practices in Access Art as a reorganizational practice. As such, Access Art can trigger in a non-direct causal relationship new political regimes of the sensible, through an embodied experience that foregrounds touch as an agential and caring connection to the environment and human and non-human others, in opposition to abstract Ocularcentric and dualistic conceptions of the self.

5.2. Space-time, knowledge and experience in Access Art

Access art questions the time profile and the tempo of our relationship to environments, the political and personal implications of this temporality; the spatial configuration of environmental encounters; and the value-laden compliance of the body-mind within these complex encounters. Access art focuses on the potential of material aesthetic devices to re-organize the exclusionary and disciplinary standard or conventional relationships between body-minds and their human and non-human surroundings, conceiving of aesthetic practices as a form of resistance and as a spatio-temporal framework to build collectively held temporary living agreements for open access (Papalia, 2023).

Although the concept of Access Art will become clearer as the principles of Disability Justice unfold, and even more when we touch on case studies of artists within the Open Access movement, let us characterize further what Access Art is by drawing on The Curiosity Paradox's *Standard Access Against Access Art*. Let us emphasize however that, until now, Access Art has been established as a correlative for standard accessibility practices, thus emphasizing its useful value for accessibility policymaking. Here, the

central aim is not to argue in favor of the accessible advantages of Access Art, but rather to provide it with a conceptual toolkit to defend its aesthetic value as an artistic practice. That is, Access Art will not be confronted with standard access practices, but rather with other artistic practices and methodologies of symbolic sense-making, to defend that Access Art is indeed a practice shaped by Disability Justice principles that leads to a collective generation of knowledge that helps everyone to navigate systems of oppression because it creates strategies of resistance and resignification that go beyond the specific experience of disability and towards the existential question of how to build our relationships with human and non-human others. According to the Curiosity Paradox, Standard Access is a set of practices that aims to erase disability from the public sphere while at the same time it fosters Disabled people's productivity and consumerism. Standard Access comes from a eugenic legacy that wants to violently integrate mixed abilities into normalcy. For us, it is central that standard access has a hierarchical configuration where specialist and experts make the rules about the spatio-temporal structures of experience or, as we could say rephrasing Rancière, about the regime of sensibilities (Rancière, 2000). In contrast, Access Art configures flexible and adaptable spatio-temporal structures, vastly shaped by the access needs of those present. Against hierarchical configurations, Access Art demands alternative modes of governance which rely on temporary agreements instead of on an appearance of consensus. In Access Art,

People with the most needs help negotiate the rules. May operate by consensus, delegation of authority, vote by majority, chance, or a mix of each. [Access Art] allows transformative accountability and change to be acts of love, respect, and collaboration. It is committed to adaptive, relational, interdependent change over time and learning together from failure. (Miller & Lee, 2022)

Therefore, Access Art practices function mainly via experiments of trial and error – a mechanism very in line with Pragmatism's emphasis on experimentation, which stresses the importance of the practical implications of each statement. This poses some challenges especially when attempting to effect changes in policy making from the standpoints of Disability Justice which, as we shall develop, are committed to an anticapitalistic, sustainable and intersectional interdependence. The Center for Intersectional Justice recognizes the difficulties concerning the intersectional standpoint in policy making, noting the following:

intersectionality is a relatively new concept in European public policy and much progress is needed in the way policies and laws – and their implementation – address intersectional discrimination and inequality. An incomplete understanding of what constitutes intersectional discrimination, its workings and effects, coupled with the belief that categories are automatically inclusive of differences leads to inadequate responses to intersectional discrimination. (CIJ, 2019)

This lack of experience poses a serious risk for intersectional approaches to policymaking, since facing discrimination without a know-how knowledge that provides us with strategies to navigate intersectional networks of inequality seems indeed to require a huge leap of faith by policymakers who do not usually feel comfortable with uncertainty and doubt. Here comes into play what I will call the *training ground argument* for Access Art. Artistic practices developed that we could count as Access Art instantiations constitute a training ground, a playful arena one could say, to perform trial and error experiments in intersectional interdependent policymaking, because in Access Art we gain experience in how we can build collectively held time and space *mis-en-scènes* grounded on temporary agreements. Since Access Art takes place in the aesthetic domain primarily, and aesthetic experience is foregrounded, it affords a playful experience of uncertainty that is centered on creativity rather than on anxiety. The «multiple ways of naming, defining, interpreting, translating, and creating across space and time» (Miller & Lee, 2022) constitute a training ground without the commitment and pressure that institutional policymaking calls for. Access Art relies on agreements reached considering the access needs of those present, acknowledging where each bodymind is acting from, not only in terms of their ability but also their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or class. Therefore, the governing modes of Access Art are shaped by Disability Justice commitments to anti-capitalist intersectional interdependence, a constitutive and normative relationship that will be developed below.

We can trace the roots of Access Art in the social practice and community engagement artistic training that emerged in the nineties and was institutionalized in 2005, when the California College of the Arts created the first Social Practice MFA. In Vancouver, Emily Carr University of Art + Design offers an undergraduate minor on Social Practice and Community Engagement (SPACE) that revises the theory and practice community-based art and explores the intersections of activism and participatory artistic practices, drawing on concepts from socially engaged disciplines like installations

and performance studies. In 2022, Emily Carr University's SPACE minor consisted of the required courses Ethics of Representation, Community Projects and the Social Practice Seminar, in addition to elective courses to be drawn from Culture and Community Interdisciplinary courses. Some notable programmes are the Moore College of Art and Design's (Philadelphia, PA) degree program on Socially Engaged Art, Wichita University Community and Social Practices Major within the BFA of Fine Arts program, the MFA in Environmental Art and Social Practice at UC Santa Cruz, Portland State University's MFA Art and Social Practice, the New School Social Practice minor offered via Parsons School of Design in New York. The New School's minor defines itself as «an invitation to blur the lines between object making, performance, political activism, community organizing, guerrilla architecture, environmentalism, and investigative journalism» (The New School, 2022), a transdisciplinary approach centered on critical studies that encapsulates the character of most of these institutionalized educational programs on social practice and community engagement.

Beyond Canada and the United States, formal training programs on social practice have been growing for the last twenty years (2000-2020), a proliferation linked to the increasing popularity of 'artistic research' in Europe, more commonly named 'research creation' in public-funded projects at the States and Canada². In the UK, social practice programs are usually present as postgraduate specializations, among which one can highlight the Art and Social Practice MA at University of the Highlands and Islands (Inverness), the Socially Engaged Arts Practice MA at University of Salford (Manchester), Theatre: Socially Engaged Practice MA at University of Portsmouth, and MA Applied Arts and Social Practice at Queen Margaret University (Edinburgh). Finally, in Australia, the University of Melbourne offers a one-year Honours Degree on Social Practice and Community Engagement in the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music.

One must not underplay the role of Emily Carr University as a pioneer in developing socially engaged fine arts programs that constituted a radical shift from the depoliticized technical training that artists were getting at undergraduate BAs and BFAs until the last decade of the twentieth century. A whole generation of Pacific Western Coast First Nations artists are alumni of Emily Carr, a collective that includes Ligwilda'xw Kwakwaka'wakw contemporary artist Sonny Assu; Cowichan/Syilx

landscape painter Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun; Dane-zaa and Swiss artist Brian Jungen; Tāltān interdisciplinary artist Tsēmā Igharas; and Cree artists Brenda Draney, Daina Warren and Âhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw - who passed away in 2006 and whose work is archived at the Grunt Gallery in Vancouver. Emily Carr also gave rise to pioneering social practitioners who wanted to work in the intersection of the arts and disability justice, among which I must highlight disability rights activist and *When I Walk* director Jason DaSilva and Vancouver-based artist Carmen Papalia.

It is from the encounter between this social practice breeding ground and Sins Invalid collective that Access Art emerges as a movement. Although *no anthology has been published* focusing on this ongoing artistic movement, after working with Access Art pioneer Carmen Papalia for three years I can gather a list of representative practitioners who are unfolding the horizons of Access Art. These are Papalia himself, Georgina Kleege, Fayen d’Evie, Amanda Cachia, Matthew Rader, Raven John, Alice Wong, Mia Mingus, Chun-Shan (Sandie) Yi, David Garneau, Collin van Uchelen, Rebel Sidney Black, Nomy Lamm, Eliza Chandler, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Grant Miller and Jonathan Paradox Lee. The most developed definition of Access Art is found in The Curiosity Paradox manifesto *Standard Access vs. Access Art* and more concisely in its initiative The Desire Path Project, where it is defined as follows:

Access Art describes the ways marginalized people and communities creatively grow resources, design accessibility, celebrate joy and resistance, out-maneuver supremacy culture, and dream worlds beyond the impossible ... It is influenced by artists, activists, and political movements, including the Disability Justice Movement, Open Access, #AccessIsLove, Pleasure Activism, and more. (Miller & Lee, 2022)

In her address at *Disruptive Re-Entries: Disability, Institutions, and Art Now*, an event celebrated by Arts Research Center at UC Berkeley on April 25, 2022, Georgina Kleege stated that focusing on touch as a central sensibility would force us to change our understanding and arranging of museums as we know them right now. For instance, inviting all visitors – and not just blind and visually-impaired people who usually get offers for touch tours – would ask for a restructuring of museum rooms: paintings would have to be unhung and exhibited in the “free space” of museums, enabling a 360° exploration of the work. After Kleege, Carmen Papalia addressed broader issues on accessibility and pleasure, among which touch and tactility had also a crucial role. The

vindication of nonvisual lived experience as a framework for community building was in line with Kleege's claim that disability experience was a very powerful disruptive framework to challenge museums, a disruption that was nonetheless productive insofar it enabled imagining other distributions of the senses which adherence to hegemonic Ocularcentric models precluded. It remains to be explored how can we organize such disruptions through a commitment to Disability Justice principles, so that they become tactics of resistance and change within a wider movement for collective liberation that dismantles oppressions and domination of disabled bodyminds.

CHAPTER III. DISABILITY JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

The ten principles of Disability Justice set out from a framework that defines itself as a “second wave” of the Disability Rights movement, in a way that moves beyond a law-centered agenda into an all-encompassing deep paradigm shift that entails reconsidering not only the way to include disabled bodyminds into existing power and social structures. This standpoint is set by developing a resistance to ableism, as characterized in the working definition developed by Talila A. Lewis, which emphasizes the multidimensional nature of this system of oppression. Ableism is defined as

A system of assigning value to people’s bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This systemic oppression that leads to people and society determining people's value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, "health/wellness", and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, "excel" and "behave." You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism. (Lewis, 2022)

Conceiving itself as a global liberation movement that affects *all bodyminds* and not a minority – since temporarily non-disabled bodyminds also experience the effects of ableism – Disability Justice constitutes a liberation movement that aims to gather the different intersectional social movements from a root ableism that still inhabits and is embraced even by progressive or Left-wing social movements (Sins Invalid, 2019: 5). As a radical challenge to able-bodied normativity, Disability Justice questions the very foundations of these structures and, as it is argued in what follows, requires also a philosophical shift that makes room for liberation and celebration of disabled bodyminds. As Sins Invalid states, a Disability Justice framework sets out from the assumptions that:

All bodies are unique and essential.
All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met.
We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.
All bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 19)

These are the common assumptions that ground a project that has taken many forms (mainly the performance art of Sins Invalid, the creative writing projects of LGBTQ+ disabled writers, the many mutual aid networks across North-American states and universities, and Access Arts practices). From these assumptions, the many forms of

Disability Justice share a vision of liberation «born out of collective struggle, drawing upon legacies of cultural and spiritual resistance ... envisioning a world where we flourish, a world that values and celebrates us in all our beauty» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 20). To execute this vision, Disability Justice pioneering collective Sins Invalid has offered the ten principles as «opportunities for movement building» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 22). The ten principles are (1) intersectionality, (2) leadership of those most impacted, (3) anti-capitalism, (4) cross-movement organizing, (5) wholeness, (6) sustainability, (7) cross-disability solidarity, (8) interdependence, (9) collective access, and (10) collective liberation – and they are usually presented through the visuals developed by Sins Invalid in 2015 and an image description for accessibility reasons (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14 A vegetable-like background in warm rosy colors with fuzzy red stems is superimposed with the ten principles of Disability Justice in a variety of black large print and bold fonts. All of them are listed in different lines, except from collective access and collective liberations, standing one next to the other. Image credit: Sins Invalid.

For each principle, I aim to provide its origin within the history of Disability Rights and Disability Justice. Then, I dig into kindred approaches to be unearthed in other liberation movements that built upon the same concept to develop tactics of resistance, and finally, the ways in which the principle operates in the tactics of resistance that are framed within the broader strategy of Disability Justice collective liberation vision in the artistic practices of Access Arts. Accordingly, the three-fold structure for each principle obeys three governing interrogations:

1. *Origins*: What contextual need does the principle respond to? How was it originated within Disability Justice communities? To what historical issues does it react to? How is it related to previous frameworks of Disability Rights?
2. *Crossings with other liberation movements and frameworks*: Have other movements or liberation scholars embraced a similar principle or concept? How is it conceptually defined in those frameworks in a way that provides a kind introduction of the principle to philosophy audiences? What characteristics help us enrich Disability Justice's conception of the principle? Can we borrow any tactics of resistance that kindred approaches have built from the same concept in a way that strengthens both the movement and builds bridges?
3. *Operating*: How is it effectively shaping liberatory artistic practices? What specific tactics of resistance rely on the principle? How does praxis and theory reciprocally shape each other in Disability Justice concerning on this principle?

It is worth noting that the tenth principle, collective liberation, will be argued to operate differently because rather than being a concrete opportunity that shapes specific tactics of resistance, collective liberation acts as the regulatory idea that informs and gives an end to the whole vision of Disability Justice. As such, it will be treated in a more concise way that rigorously defines its operativity and reach within the movement. The aim of this detailed contextualization and philosophical enrichment through the kindred approach sections is to make sense of Disability Justice principles as a radically transformative framework, and endow them with their rightful conceptual weight before examining how they operate when designing reorganizational practices in Access Arts, which will be the subject matter of the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

1. Intersectionality

We do not live single-issue lives” – Audre Lorde. Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world ‘invalid.’ (Berne, 2015)

Simply put, this principle says that we are many things, and they all impact us. We are not only disabled, we are also each coming from a specific experience of race, class, sexuality, age, religious background, geographical location, immigration status, and more. Depending on context, we all have areas where we experience privilege, as well as areas of oppression. The term “intersectionality” was first introduced by feminist theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe the experiences of Black women, who experience both racism and sexism in specific ways. We gratefully embrace the nuance that this principle brings to our lived experiences, and the ways it shapes the perspectives we offer. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 23)

1.1. Origins

For Disability Justice, taking the standpoint of intersectionality at the outset of its principles is a direct response to the single-issue approach to disability from previous Disability Rights movements.¹ Contrastingly, an intersectional stand takes into account the many identities that shape a bodymind as a whole, without forcing a pretension of abstract uprooting that chooses one identity among that multiplicity. However, it is worth specifying how intersectionality is articulated in DJ contexts, if we are to avoid a “lazy intersectionality” that may lose its critical and reorganizational potential into a vague imposture (Watermeyer and Swartz, 2023: 363). For this reason, we need to trace back the need for the principle in virtue of a double selectiveness: a historical “selective intersectionality” that has left out disability as a shaping force in conjunction with race/class/gender (Watermeyer and Swartz, 2023: 365), and a stand-alone activism in Disability Rights which homogenized disabled experiences regardless of other determining factors and matrixes of oppression. Once contextualized, the key characteristics of DJ intersectionality will be developed drawing on resources from Anna Julia Cooper, Kimberle Crenshaw, and Patricia Hill Collins’ conceptualization – these concepts, I argue, afford the possibility of developing tactics within Disability Justice praxis that condition the internal dynamics of the movement and its relationship with other liberation movements. These two dynamics informed by intersectionality will find

¹ The difference between the stand-alone approach of Disability Rights and its contrast with the embracing of intersectionality and complexity of disability experiences in the ‘second wave’ of activism established by Disability Justice has been developed at length in Chapter I above.

further expression in the principles of cross-disability solidarity and cross-movement organizing, correspondingly.

The principle of intersectionality situates Disability Justice within a specific framework that conceives *identities* as multiple and complex – this is mainly a ontological shift from a reductive conception of bodyminds that favors one identity over the rest and excludes any kind of cohabitation. If we pay attention to the principle’s claim, we can fathom a model of identity that is layered, stratified and decentralized. Two elements enable this paradigm: the vindication of Audre Lorde’s thought as a precedent who for the situated intersectional knowledge embraced by Disability Justice, and the rhetoric usage of a complementary and superimposing language – ‘coupled’, ‘supported’, and ‘underscored’. Lorde’s starting quote, «we do not live single issue lives» (Lorde, 1984: 138), introduces both an element of multiplicity and a valorization of lived experience as a source for thinking identity. Rejecting single-issue approaches, Lorde demands an approach to identity that embraces complexity. However, when considering both her thought and the cumulative emphasis of the language deployed in the principle, the concept of intersectionality takes a particular shape that cannot be presumed a priori: while ‘inter-sectionality’ usually brings about an image of crisscrossing, of lines of intersecting axis represented in Morgan’s diagram (Fig. 15); intersectionality within Disability Justice brings to the fore the overlap of coats and the shared cohabitation of multiple identities, rather than determinate points of juncture.

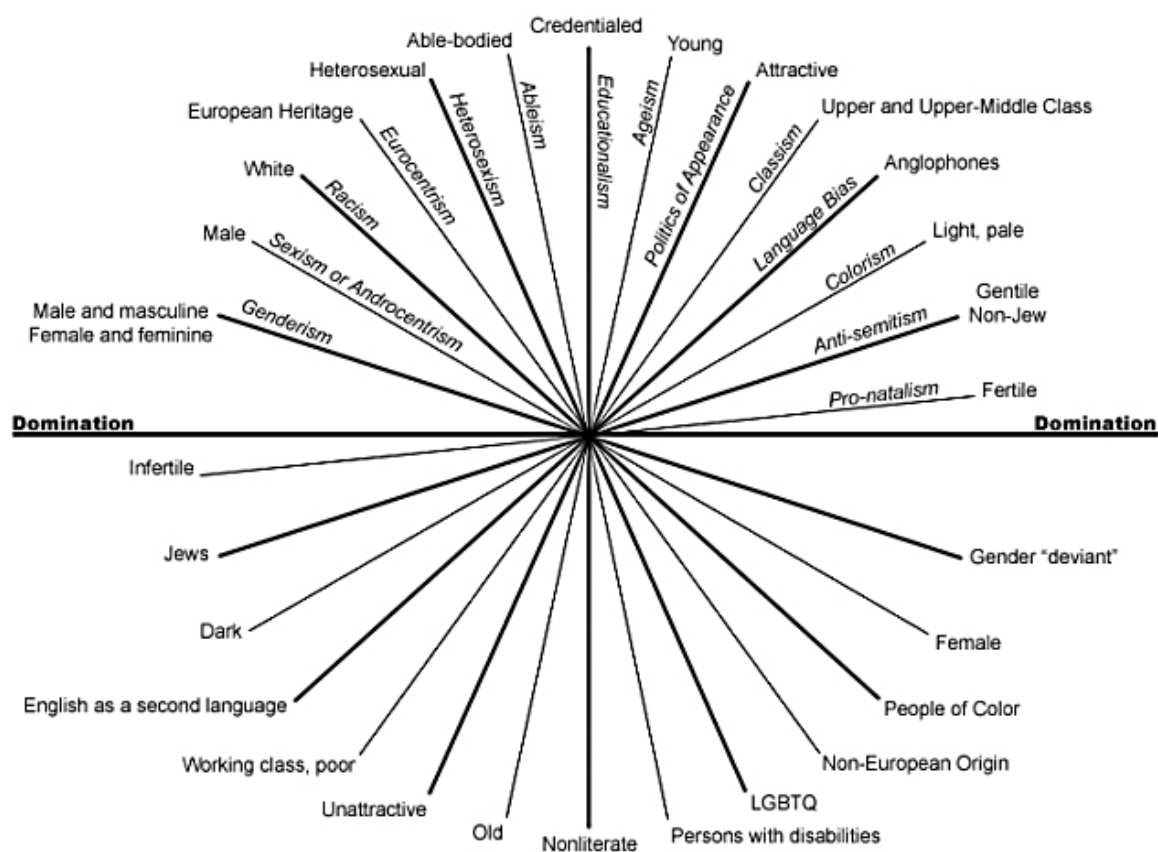


Fig.15 Intersecting axes of privilege, oppression and domination. Source: Morgan, 1996.

We might get a better representation, or rather allegory, of what intersectionality *feels like* in Jillian Crochet’s touch-responsive sculptures featured in the Contemporary Jewish Museum’s exhibition *Tikkun: For the Cosmos, the Community, and Ourselves*. As an artistic reflection upon the concept of wholeness and repair, Crochet placed twenty amorphous, grey velvet pillow-like bodies in a pile. The sculptures are distinct, varying in hues and texture, but they affect each other in their overlapping and accommodation to the others. Crochet encouraged visitors to touch the work, to inhabit it by sitting, caressing, moving around the bodies in such a way that the piece was constantly changing, the relations among the sculptures were temporary. Their transformation was dependent upon both their context and internal dynamics – i.e., what other bodies came into contact with them and how that shaped the amorphous body – and external action. I believe that Crochet’s work can serve here to embody Disability Justice’s conception of intersectional identity as a multitude of reciprocally transforming overlapping surfaces.



Fig. 16 A set of twenty pillow-like grey velvet sculptures sits next to the wall. Some of them are placed on top of each other, adapting reciprocally to the other's gravitating pressure. Credit: Jillian Crochet. Photo credit: Contemporary Jewish Museum.

Beyond the ontological reorientation of identities towards a multiple, relational and temporary account that eschews fundamentalist accounts of the self as a monolithic stable entity, the intersectional approach brings into Disability Justice a mode of critical inquiry and praxis shaped by the characterization of intersectionality provided by harbinger Anna Julia Cooper and explicit theorist coining the concept Crenshaw and Collins. These characteristics are: (1) a shift from *either/or* dualisms towards *both/and* logics which can accommodate (2) a firm rejection of choosing one identity to the detriment of others. This framework leads to (3) a praxis-oriented standpoint towards social justice calling for coalitional models of liberation.

1.2. Kindred approach: Black Feminist Conceptions of Intersectionality

(1) Opening the list of principles with a commitment to intersectionality as the first organizational guidepost entails situating Disability Justice within a framework with deep philosophical and practical implications. Locating oneself from an intersectional standpoint means radically shifting the operative logic of our thought, which will have significant consequences in our *praxis*. First and foremost, it means rejecting a single-axis framework that forces us into *either/or* dichotomist thinking (Collins, 1991: 69) committed to «mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis» (Crenshaw, 1989: 139). This exclusionary logic leads to the theoretical erasure of multiple oppression,

and universalizes experiences of discrimination and disadvantage under a stand-alone categorical axis (Crenshaw, 1989: 140). As Crenshaw argued in her 1989 landmark essay «Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics», a single axis framework imposes a logic that forecloses any analysis of complex experiences and takes as a model the experiences of «otherwise-privileged members of the group» to the detriment of the multiply oppressed:

This focus on the most privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination. I suggest further that this focus on otherwise-privileged group members creates a distorted analysis of racism and sexism because the operative conceptions of race and sex become grounded in experiences that actually represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon (Crenshaw, 1989: 140)

Crenshaw's proposal for an intersectional analysis that considers multiple matrixes of oppression, namely race/class/gender, would be extended by Patricia Hill Collins to include the axes of sexual orientation, religion, and age (Collins 1991: 225). However, both Crenshaw and Collins argue that it is not sufficient to 'include' or 'integrate' this axis into dominant conceptions of discrimination, incorporating them in existing analytic frameworks. Shifting towards intersectionality requires a new analytical structure that addresses and emphasizes the *interconnections* and mutually transformative relationships between matrixes of oppression, because «intersectional experience is greater than the sum of» oppressed experiences (Crenshaw, 1989: 140). Collins proposes a *both/and* logic as an alternative to single-issue analytical «models of oppression rooted in the either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought» (Collins, 1991:225). Therefore, *both/and* logic constitutes a shift towards a relational non-exclusionary thinking (Collins, 2016: 27) that embraces the complexities of the lived experiences of multiply oppressed bodyminds, as well as the conflicts and contradictions that arise when we do not adhere to a universalized hegemonic uniformity as an analytical type, and attend the context-dependent, embodied, and situated lived experiences as a valuable source of knowledge and inquiry.

(2) Although the developed formulation of the principle of Intersectionality signals Kimberlé Crenshaw coining of the term in 1989 as the landmark introduction of the term to designate an approach that considered both race and gender in the experience

of Black women, effective precedents of this approach can be traced back to previous Black Feminist Pragmatist, most notably in the writings of Anna Julia Cooper. For our purposes, Cooper's contribution accounts for the multiplicity embraced by an intersectional standpoint. In *A Voice from the South*, Cooper notes the double oppression experienced by Black women who suffer how «the condemnation of man's inhumanity to woman is increased and embittered by the knowledge of personal identity with a race of beings so fallen» (Cooper, 1988: 91). As such, Vivian May has noted how Cooper «refuses a hierarchy of oppressions and therefore rejects choosing between either "race" or "gender" solidarity (and the false universalization of group experience and identity that entails) in favor of a "both/and" model of coalition» (May, 2007: 167). This both/and framework informs an analysis of domination and oppression that builds bridges between the oppressed, arguing that liberation can only be attempted if social movements reject «a narrow view of their own aims and principles» and avoid «all prejudices, whether of race, sect or sex, class pride and caste distinctions» (Cooper, 1988: 118). Cooper's vindication of a multiple identity that firmly rejects an exclusionary identification was rooted in her life experience, for instance, in *A Voice from the South* she narrates her internal conflict when faced with the following disjunction at a train station: «I see two dingy little rooms with "FOR LADIES" swinging over one and "FOR COLORED PEOPLE" over the other; while wondering under which head I come» (Cooper, 1988: 96). This experience led her to consider the double exclusion of Black women, who could not fit neither in racist feminist movements nor in sexist Black liberation movements – she identifies this double otherness as follows:

The colored woman of to-day occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country. In a period of itself transitional and unsettled, her status seems one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all the forces which make for our civilization. She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both. While the women of the white race can with calm assurance enter upon the work they feel by nature appointed to do, while their men give loyal support and appreciative countenance to their efforts, recognizing in most avenues of usefulness the propriety and the need of woman's distinctive co-operation, the colored woman too often finds herself hampered and shamed by a less liberal sentiment and a more conservative attitude on the part of those for whose opinion she cares most. That this is not universally true I am glad to admit. There are to be found both intensely conservative white men and exceedingly liberal colored men. But as far as my experience goes the average man of our race is less frequently ready to admit the actual need among the sturdier forces of the world for woman's help or influence. (Cooper, 1988: 134-5)

Despite this exclusion, Cooper vindicated that choosing one identity – Black *or* woman – to the detriment of the others, as if one negated the others,² is an «erroneous isolation and separation of identities» (May, 2007: 94). According to May’s reading of Cooper, such a multiplicity does not necessarily result in a harmonious totality – quite contrarily, the multiple matrixes of oppression and domination can lead up to internal conflicts and self-doubt due to not adhering fully to a homogenized hegemonic collective. Such conflicts, May continues, are also palpable in Cooper’s style of writing:

Cooper’s insights about the complexities of identity, power, and knowledge come to the fore once we recognize that what may appear to be a fragmented, disjointed, at times conciliatory or contradictory methodology on her part is, in fact, a noncompliant methodology of dissent. (May, 2007: 106)³

Cooper’s embracement of multiplicity was in tension with single-issue activism, and required a *both/and* framework (May, 2007: 95) that could accommodate an intersectional theory of identity as both woman *and* Black. In line with this *both/and* framework, she developed coalitional political models of liberation that she embodied in her activism (May, 2007: 13, 49). Coalition and solidarity, she argued, was the only viable way towards collective liberation. And although her essays address more poignantly the issues of race and gender, some passages enable us to fathom how the strategies of

² May details how «Cooper refused to “choose” one political goal at the expense of another; she insisted on thinking holistically and was continually frustrated by colleagues and allies who could not seem to see, as Cooper clearly could, that liberation would never be achieved via an either/or binary approach» (May, 2007: 94). This approach rendered her as dissident and unfit in many circles that defended the universal experience of women and the universal oppression of Black people, which at the same time reproduced prejudiced views of other systems of oppression, for instance, many Southern women associations rejected alliances with Black women. As a response, Cooper argues, «the Black Woman has tried to understand the Southern [white] woman’s difficulties; to put herself in her place, and to be as fair, as charitable, and as free from prejudice in judging her antipathies ... she has honestly weighed the apparently sincere excuse, “But you must remember that these people were once our slaves” » (Cooper, 1988: 100).

³ It is worth noting how, despite promoting a coalitional and conciliatory approach, Cooper does not refrain from irony when exposing the mindset of Southern white women who championed Women’s rights but held onto racial prejudice, as in the following passage: «the Southern woman—I beg her pardon—the Southern *lady* ... must not, in any organization she may deign to grace with her presence be asked to associate with "these people who were once her slaves." Now the Southern woman (I may be pardoned, being one myself) was never renowned for her reasoning powers» (Cooper, 1988: 108). I find in this irony a nuanced comprehension of how, despite building coalitions, real solidarity and alliances between white and Black women was not without great obstacles, since white women «might enter ten thousand organizations besprinkled with colored *women without being any more deflected by them than by the proximity of a stone*» (Cooper, 1988: 110). Such a lack of deflection and real closeness between women with incommensurable experiences of oppression can be greatly attributed to (but *not* justified by) the radical dehumanization of Black women that still inhabited post-slavery America in 1892.

coalition put forward by Cooper aimed at a much greater cross-movement solidarity between the oppressed:

Women should not, even by inference, or for the sake of argument, seem to disparage what is weak. For woman's cause is the cause of the weak; and when all the weak shall have received their due consideration, then women will have their "rights," and the Indian will have his rights, and the Negro will have his rights, and all the strong will have learned at last to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly; and our fair land will have been taught the secret of universal courtesy which is after all nothing but the art, the science, and the religion of regarding one's neighbor as one's self, and to do for him as we would, were conditions swapped, that he do for us. (Cooper, 1988: 117)

1.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

(3) Cooper's coalitional organizational model is paradigmatic of how inquiry and praxis are interwoven in intersectional approaches. In *Intersectionality*, Patricia Hill Collins points out how inequality and social justice are core guideposts that reappear in contexts where intersectionality is used as an analytic tool (Collins, 2016: 25). Therefore, we find in Cooper a precedent of what Collins identifies as a correlation between an intersectional approach and a commitment to social justice:

Social justice may be intersectionality's most contentious core idea, but it is one that expands the circle of intersectionality to include people who use intersectionality as an analytic tool for social justice. Working for social justice is not a requirement for intersectionality. Yet people who are engaged in using intersectionality as an analytic tool and people who see social justice as central rather than as peripheral to their lives are often one and the same. These people are typically critical of, rather than accepting of, the status quo. (Collins, 2016: 30)

Social justice, transformative justice, and liberation hence appear as core ideas in intersectional approaches, which entail a commitment to a critical practice beyond inquiry in order to enact effective change afforded precisely by thinking of our experiences from a *both/and* standpoint that challenges the *either/or* dichotomies that structure our everyday and institutional lived experience (Collins, 2016: 32). For Collins, critical inquiry and praxis in intersectional frameworks are intertwined in a synergistic relationship (Collins, 2016: 48) in such a way that a sharp contrast can only be drawn for analytical purposes. What is more, intellectual inquiry itself *can be* a site of praxis in itself (Collins, 2012) because it constitutes an inquiry that «takes a stand» that seeks to understand the complexities of overlapping systems of oppression, power, and

domination, but also to «imagine alternatives, and/or propose viable action strategies for change» (Collins, 2016: 40).⁴

The organizational potential of an intersectional approach is manifest in local, grassroots and community-based organizations that locate themselves in this approach. These groups «form networks or coalitions of like-minded groups, drawing upon intersectionality to shape the logistics of how they organize as well as the political agendas they pursue» (Collins, 2016: 43). Coalitions and alliances are thus built, not only within the different standpoints and lived experience that cohabit in the organization, but also with other movements and organizations who embrace multi-issue activism because they are «aware of the damage caused by single-issue politics on multiply oppressed populations» (Collins, 2016: 44). It is worth noting how such coalitions and alliances are not taken as a given, but rather are the result of a process and a struggle that stems from a collective agreement and commitment to leaving no one behind, to deconstructing *either/or* prejudices that have distributed who counts and who does not count in a movement, thus becoming theoretically negligible. In the case of Disability Justice, the commitment to coalitional politics that is derived from an intersectional approach will take the form of internal dynamics of *cross-disability solidarity* within the movement, and of external dynamics of alliance through *cross-movement organizing*.

2. Leadership of the most impacted

When we talk about ableism, racism, sexism & transmisogyny, colonization, police violence, etc., we are not looking to academics and experts to tell us what's what – we are lifting up, listening to, reading, following, and highlighting the perspectives of those who are most impacted by the systems we fight against. By centering the leadership of those most impacted, we keep ourselves grounded in real-world problems and find creative strategies for resistance. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 23)

2.1. Origins

The principle of the leadership of the most impacted follows the principle of intersectionality and adds a layer of weighting where those who are most impacted by the

⁴ Naples has put forward the phrase “intersectional feminist praxis” as a tool to highlight the interwovenness of theory and praxis in Feminist intersectional approaches to oppression. Including ‘praxis’ in the denomination emphasizes the shaping force of lived experience and activism for theoretical approaches (Naples, 2009: 574).

multiple systems of power relationships, in the sense that their identities defy the normative hegemonic center established by an abstraction of personhood, have a double priority. First, an epistemic priority where their experiences are deemed as epistemologically valid and valuable, and second, an organizing priority that follows precisely from their perspectival wisdom, which establishes them in a position of leadership when designing Disability Justice-informed spaces and practices. The leadership of the most impacted vindicates the experiences and genius of BIPOC and/or LGBTQ+ folks with disabilities as the center from which the movement can build capacity and create a community. In their formulation of the principles in Plain Language, Arc Minnesota states: «Leadership of people who have disabilities is powerful» and continues «they are experts who have experience that must be respected. People who have disabilities must lead change in systems and society because they have power and know what is best for them» (Arc Minnesota, 2021).

As a weighting principle, therefore, centering the experiences of the most impacted counterbalances two historical tendencies in Disability Rights which are the preeminence of able-bodied and able-bodied people in positions of power and decision-making, and the hyper-visibility of white people with mobility impairments in activism. This hyper-visibility caused a comparative tort in comparison with people with less visible disabilities and reinforced a stereotype of disability as a single-issue identity – a dynamic that will be analyzed in depth when discussing cross-disability solidarity below. For the purposes of accounting for the need of leadership of the most impacted, I will focus on how «lifting up, listening to, reading, following, and highlighting the perspectives of those who are most impacted by ... ableism, racism, sexism & transmisogyny, colonization, police violence, etc.» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 23) over the analysis provided by experts constitutes a reorganization of knowledge hierarchies (Rancière, 2023) that does not simply reverse roles, thus preserving a hierarchy that reinforces injustice. Prioritizing the leadership of the most impacted, I argue, requires a reconceptualization of power and leadership in such a way that opens possibilities for hierarchies that create community and build capacity – an approach that finds a rich pool of resources in the notions of connected leadership, as conceptualized by Jane Addams and practice in the Hull House settlement; and in the more recent proposal of liberatory power. These concepts enable us to make sense of organizational practices in Disability

Justice that center the most impacted in powerful positions of leadership *not at the expense* of instituting a new powerless majority, because such centering is committed to an approach that acknowledges that anyone can occupy the position of the most impacted at some point due to the inextricable vulnerability of the privileges we can hold as temporarily able-bodied and able-minded (Taylor, 2019).

2.2. Kindred approach: Liberatory connected leadership

From this standpoint, the question arises about how the leadership of the most impacted operates as an organizational principle without reproducing oppressive hierarchies that render a class of bodies, minds, needs, and desires as neglectable and powerless. A fruitful proposal to rethink leadership as a hierarchical albeit non-oppressive organization can be found in Caroline Levine’s analysis of hierarchy as a form, that is, «*an arrangement of elements – an ordering, patterning, or shaping*» (Levine, 2015: 3) which can perform different operations in different contexts due to the variety of potential uses encapsulated in the form (Levine, 2015: 6). This reading of hierarchy as a form opens the possibility for “imaginative uses” where hierarchy as «a specific form can be put to use in unexpected ways that expand our general sense of that form’s affordances», of what that form makes possible and the world it can generate in the sense of different distributions of the sensible (Levine, 2015: 6). Levine emphasizes how forms do not operate in isolation, but rather in tensions and encounters with other forms so that contextual dimensions shape how forms order and shape. In the case of hierarchies:

Hierarchies arrange bodies, things, and ideas according to levels of power or importance. Hierarchies rank – organizing experience into asymmetrical, discriminatory, often unjust arrangements. The most consistent and painful affordance of hierarchical structures is inequality. Hierarchies are in this respect the most troubling of all the forms. (Levine, 2015: 82)

That is, insofar hierarchies generate power and value differentials among elements and classes, Levine rightfully notes that when a hierarchy is established, one element becomes suppressed, subordinated or neglected. Considering this tendency, then, establishing a leadership of the most impacted in Disability Justice becomes a challenge that requires constant resistance against oppressive hierarchies so that an ordering of importance can be constituted for organizational purposes *intentionally acting* with a commitment to avoid purposefully harming and violating those who are not in a

leadership position. However, if one remains attentive to the risks ingrained in hierarchical organizations that generate a differentiated leading position, Levine argues that hierarchy as a form holds the potential of holding non-oppressive ways of building relationships, and they can in fact become a powerful tool to effectively arrange new distributions of power:

The most strategic approach to the power exerted by hierarchies then, is not always to dismantle, flatten, or upend them. If we start instead by observing hierarchical forms to see what arrangements they impose and to consider what happens to their organizing power then they intersect with other forms, we can find new ways of disturbing their power (Levine, 2015: 85)

Hierarchy as an organizational form becomes then a powerful tactic of resistance to counterbalance oppressive systems of power, a potential that had already been recognized by social justice movement organizers of the twentieth century both in theory and praxis. To circle back to the notion of leadership put forward by the Disability Justice principles, I resort to Jane Addams conception of *connected leadership* as a shaping organizational form of the Hull House settlement. The Hull House Settlement was founded in Chicago in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr. It was part of a wider settlement houses movement that grew and established settlements in Boston and New York too. As Seigfried narrates, «Hull House in Chicago developed a pragmatist experimental model of transaction that criticized top-down approaches to problem solving in favor of working with others in a way calculated to change the attitudes and habits of both the settlement workers... and members of the impoverished working-class neighborhood with whom they worked» (Seigfried, 1999: 212).

As Maurice Hamington has noted, «although Addams favors the engaged participation of group members, she is not adverse to leadership», recognizing the effective role of leadership in social reform; however, «consistent with her notions of active listening and participation, however, leaders should be well connected to their constituency» (Hamington, 2004: 115). Connectedness here entails a double dimension: first, it refers to the tangible connection of being embedded in the network of interdependence the community consists of; but second, it also refers to the emotional connection with the rest of the community and their needs and desires, so that leaders can built genuine caring relationships with/in the community. This emotional connectedness,

says Addams, requires cultivating a sense of intimacy with others, so that leaders «living near to the masses of voters, and knowing them intimately, recognize this and act upon it; they minister directly to life and to social needs» (Addams, 2002 [1902]: 99). Therefore, connected leadership is performed within a framework of caring and intimate relationships with others that resist neglecting them through active listening and active understanding of their circumstances (Hamington, 2004: 117). As Charlene Haddock Seigfried emphasizes, Hull House residents recognized «through daily interactions that those with whom [they] worked that they had as much to contribute to the resolution of neighborhood problems as the settlement workers did» (Seigfried, 1999: 221). Addams notes, then, that establishing a leadership position does not necessarily conduce to generating an oppressed and powerless majority, if we commit to the following plea:

in our social relations, we must demand that the individual shall be willing to lose the sense of personal achievement and shall be content to realize his activity only in connection with the activity of the many. (Addams, 2002 [1902]: 119)

Addams developed in praxis the organizational practice of connected leadership in the settlement of Hull House. Hamington finds in Addams herself and the residents of Hull House an example of a kind of leadership that is grounded and embedded in the community due to their commitment to care about and be attentive to the needs of the community. Care and attentiveness shaped a leadership that sympathetically acknowledged the need for communication to understand others who are differently situated, given the limitation that comes with «a recognition that all understanding is perspectival and value laden» (Seigfried, 1999: 225). For Addams, this limitation was to be corrected by a connected leadership that avoided the common «failure to recognize the situation in which the majority of working people are placed» and the «tendency to ignore their real experiences and needs» (Addams, 2002 [1902]: 207). Addams recognized that to meet those needs, leadership in decision-making and project management was an effective tactic⁵ in the sense that it facilitates intentional action directed towards transforming interactions with others that in turn can modify wider habits of interaction among interdependent bodyminds that constitute the community. However, for Addams,

⁵ In this respect, Addams standpoint contrasts with a position that vindicated that Hull House should be organized as a leaderless community that prioritized organizational equality above differentials of power (Addams, 1910: 186).

leaders must avoid being «good “to” people rather than “with” them», a deficient mode of leadership that took place when leaders «decide what is best for [people] instead of consulting them» (Addams, 2002 [1902]: 154). Her proposal, then, is connected leadership as a tactic to enact a way of doing and caring about others, of being “with” others, that would ultimately benefit all if we reorganized social distribution around these habits that the connected leader personifies.

Concerning the habits that connected leadership entails, which I argue will shape the organizational practice of leadership in Disability Justice, further characterization is needed. Here, Cindy Suarez’s analysis of complex power dynamics from the standpoint of Black feminist liberatory leadership enables us to make sense of how hierarchical forms plotted by connected leaders can still constitute a resistance to oppressive power systems, and how they can contribute to the collective liberation that is the guiding aim of Disability Justice. Suarez sets forth a kind of leadership that performs liberatory power in a way that takes hierarchy as a form to advance justice. Creating levels of leadership and participation that modulate interactions between levels and provide support and opportunities that ensure the participation of all bodyminds can afford collaborative processes while simultaneously facilitating «clarity of vision, the attractive force of integrity, the ability to see and design for multiplicity, the ability to connect across difference, and the ability to imagine a better world» (Suarez, 2022b). Within this framework, Suarez aligns her proposal with Levine’s conception of hierarchy as a form that can hold both just and unjust power differences. Power, then, is a relational difference that structures the distribution of bodyminds and their occupations in different ways – Suarez distinguishes two kinds of power: *supremacist power* and *liberatory power*. Supremacist power is exclusionary and rests on a premise of domination, mastery, and control over people and things that is exploitative and separated from the dominated. Suarez argues that it rests on an austerity model that holds that there is a limited supply of things we need and desire – love, recognition, power – and therefore it is justified that a vast majority is excluded from accessing those things (Suarez, 2018b).

Contrastingly, liberatory power aims to advance liberation understood as «the experience of wholeness, freedom, justice, and thriving» (Suarez, 2022a) that is not restricted by the austerity model, and thus rejects to render some bodyminds powerless

because it is committed to making room for agency and recognition for all. Liberatory leadership, correspondingly, exerts power in a way that resists a dualist idea of power that divides bodyminds into privileged/oppressed and instead embraces building capacity in effective interactions to transform reality into envisioned worlds, thus attributing a central role to imagination and magical thinking within liberatory leadership (Suarez, 2021). As Suarez argues, «to assert one’s own power in a way that promotes mutuality, one must know the type of power one seeks» (Suarez, 2018b) and what liberatory leadership grants to Addams’ connected leadership is a characterization of the kinds of intentional effective interaction that liberation practices demand.

Useful liberation practices focus on effective interactions—interactions that disrupt dominating behavior (the taking of more than one’s share) and generate mutuality (practicing reciprocity in relationships). There are two key points regarding effective interactions: (1) one must constantly refuse powerless identities in interactions, and (2) one can build capacity for effective interactions. It is in everyday interactions that one either contributes to unequal power dynamics or interrupts them ... Liberatory power helps one refrain from asserting power over others, or to do so carefully. (Suarez, 2018b)

2.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

Building capacity through effective interactions that actively reject oppressive hierarchies and promote liberatory hierarchies lies in the core of mixed ability organizing in Disability Justice and Access Art practices. Sins Invalid defines this organizational form as follows:

Mixed ability organizing requires us to identify and bridge between different capacities, orientations, and relationships of power. It means paying attention to and being honest about the complexities of being in a body, and developing practices capable of attending to that complexity ... *A disability justice approach to mixed ability organizing asks more of people than simply acknowledging their oppression or privilege; it asks us to move beyond the disembodiment (state of being disconnected from one’s body) that we have been socialized into under ableism ...* What does it mean to actively take stock of our capacities, our bodies, and our relationships to institutional power in relation to each other? Sometimes it means being honest about our physical, cognitive, or emotional limitations, and asking for the kinds of support we need. At other times it might mean challenging internalized ableism and embracing what our bodyminds do have the capacity for. Or it could mean learning to honestly identify and use our relative privileges in order to support collective access and disability justice movement-building. However, it is also important for those working within mixed ability organizing contexts to recognize the ways in which using our relative privilege can inadvertently reproduce the violence and hierarchies of ableism, racism, patriarchy, sexism & transmisogyny, classism, etc. The leadership of disabled people of color and queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming people

with disabilities should always be at the center of disability justice movement building. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 65-66, my emphasis)

It is worth noting how the leadership of BIPOC, queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming people with disabilities in mixed ability organizing entails a reconceptualization of power as way of establishing relationships between bodyminds and as a governing force that distributes which «bodies, minds, and hearts, desires, needs, and limits» (Sins Invalid, 2016: 32) are worth being considered, and which ones are neglected. From this standpoint, Disability Justice not only acknowledges that some bodyminds are more vulnerable to being neglected than others, but rather *actively works towards* correcting such neglect through a commitment of leaving no one behind. Moreover, such intentional action that locates at the center of Disability Justice the most impacted in terms of gender, class, race, and disability, requires a constant effort of self-examination to avoid reproducing exclusionary dynamics, e.g., «to recognize the ways in which using our relative privilege can inadvertently reproduce the violence and hierarchies of ableism, racism, patriarchy, sexism and transmisogyny, classism, etc.» (Sins Invalid, 2016: 32). Therefore, leadership of the most impacted privileges temporary structures of power and leadership insofar it recognizes both the risks of any hierarchical organization – albeit liberatory or connected – and the mutability of who occupies the position of the most impacted. This mutability means that being affected by systems of power and violence is highly contingent and context-dependent, and consequently whose experience is centered must be reassessed in each instance. The scope of contingency comprises as well each bodymind’s ever-changing state – that is, weighting dynamics that prioritize the leadership of the most impacted need to constantly resist exclusionary and reifying conceptions of identity and abstract disembodied categorization of bodyminds and, alternatively, need to embrace the inextricable vulnerability of all bodyminds to being the most impacted.

As Asun Pié Balaguer argues, this shift towards acknowledging the temporality of our relative privileges and embracing vulnerability constitutes a resistance to and an insurrection against the premise of integrity and self-sufficiency upon which neoliberal conceptions of the human are built. This premise, Balaguer states, is a «fundamental philosophical and historical mistake» (Balaguer, 2020: 19) that negates vulnerability and fragility precisely because they have the potential of unearthing the error of this premise.

Embracing vulnerability, on the contrary, drives us towards a path shaped by «the centrality that care must take in our lives, the necessary politization of pain (as an apology of vulnerability), the generation of interdependence webs, and the acceptance of our perishable bodies as a possibility of relation and resistance» (Balaguer, 2020: 19). Such embrace of the perishable nature of our bodyminds and the transitory time profile of any social position or phenomenological state we inhabit is central in Disability Justice's notion of "temporarily able-bodiedness", a term that highlights that «any position is situated, inconsistent, finite» (López Gil, 2013) all bodyminds are constantly exposed to disability, pain, and illness as a fundamental part of existence.

Acknowledging how disability is not an exclusionary identity, and vindicating what we could call *the universal experience of disability*, Disability Justice-informed Access Art practices organize themselves around a leadership of the most impacted through a cultivation of caring habits and caring knowledge that cover the access needs and make room for bodyminds who host embodied knowledge of a variety of modes of navigating the world. In her address connecting Disability Justice and Radical Self Love, Sonya Renee Taylor explains how the principle of leadership of the most impacted shapes organizational dynamics through hypothetical thinking and imaginary scenarios of *as if* that unearth the vulnerability of all bodyminds to occupy the position of the most impacted:

If you could figure out how to make a world that works for a fat queer trans undocumented disabled woman of color we would figure out how to make a world that works for everybody ... If you could figure out a way where this human being could get access to all the resources they needed to thrive in our world, we could definitely figure out a world where you could too, right? But the reality is we will not start there, and part of the reason we don't start there is because we assume that she does not know what she needs. That she isn't the expert in her experience. Radical self-love assumes that we are experts in our experiences, and as such we should be guiding the systems, policies and legislations that lead us forward for an equitable world. And that if we are not at the table making these decisions, then we are only recreating inequity and injustice. (Taylor, 2019)

I retrieve Taylor's formulation of the problem of building a world, a culture,⁶ that can sustain the most impacted bodyminds and cover their access needs because I think it

⁶ I rely here on the Deweyan definition of culture as a mode of governing the transactions between selves and their environment (both human others, living systems, and earth others). Jonathan Flowers takes Dewey's transactional model beyond, in order to make it account for the emergence of disability cultures. Flowers agrees that his vision impairment is resolved «through reaching out to a cultural environment»

performs a very clever strategy: it takes as a paradigm the figure of the “fat queer trans undocumented disabled woman of color” as an identity that inhabits a social location extremely far from the intersections of identities valued by the dominant culture to build a world *as if* we all navigated the world as this figure. If we can build a world that sustains this bodymind, she argues, «we could definitely figure out a world where you could [thrive]» (Taylor, 2019). I vindicate Taylor’s approach because of its rhetorical effectiveness in communicating how oppression is intersectional, multi-varied and a matter of degree rather than a dichotomy. Her formulation reminds us that, although we may not ever inhabit the locus of the «fat queer trans undocumented disabled woman of color», we will at many points in our live find ourselves wronged by different systems of oppression, and then we will like to have build a world that can sustain our lives. Concerning disability, we must note that the level of productivity demanded by capitalism is materially detrimental to all bodies. Most of us (if not all) are temporally-abled bodyminds: accidents, aging, illness, burnout, and other common phenomena can instantly place us in the social locus of disabilities of different degrees.

For this reason, I want to emphasize the *universal experience of disability* as a radical symptom of the inextricable vulnerability of bodyminds, which refers to the fact that we all are at all times either actually or potentially disabled. We are always at risk of inhabiting the social location of disability and illness, it is a universal experience that takes many shapes but that potentially equates all bodyminds. Therefore, the task of making a sustainable world is a caring responsibility that concerns all bodyminds. How can we build caring habits and caring knowledge grounded on the phenomenological embodied consciousness of our temporarily able-bodiedness? I argue that this concern can be triggered by Access Art practices that shift our attention to the possibility of a

(Flowers, 2021: 52), which leads him to identify Culture as both the source of and resolution to disability. At this point of the argument, I disagree with Flowers’ claim that «Culture is both the source of and resolution to disability» (2021: 52) due to the monolithic nature attributed to Culture, which I think that contradicts the cultural pluralism that Deweyan models of transactional culture afford. As I understand it, a more nuanced analysis of the worlds or cultures interconnected in the reading of Flowers’ disability and the cultural response is required. If we want to pay attention to the different modes of navigating the world, all of which enable us to take part in human activity but maybe through patterns of behavior that make us recognized as members of one culture or another. Flowers presents disability as a conflict with dominant culture, and its resolution as a re-integration into this same culture, which flattens the potential of the Deweyan transactional model of culture to account for how other patterns of behavior that do not conform to the conventional patterns of the dominant culture have a cultural value and build their own cultures, with no need for masking, rehabilitation or assimilation.

myriad of ways to navigate our environments, that open us up to disability cultures as a world we can travel to at any point of our lives. The embodied experiences of Access Art can then provide an embodied knowledge of the *universal experience of disability*, which Taylor describes as the “invalid majority” as follows:

The simple structure of capitalism and the nature of burnout will eventually render your body invalid as well. So those of us who are trying to cash in our able-bodied privilege right now, *be clear it is not a lasting privilege*. So, where will you be when that privilege leaves you? If you are not creating a world today that makes room, space and equity for that? If you are not currently laboring for creating room, space and equity for disabled bodies, when you become a disabled body – and it is highly likely that you will! – you will reap the world you created. (Taylor, 2019)

Access Art develops tactics of resistance that make room for the most impacted and creates worlds where those bodies, minds, needs and desires are considered and valued in such a way that they can not only lead sustainable lives, but also thrive, through committing to ensuring leadership positions to disabled BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists, curators, and practitioners. The plea for filling significant leadership roles in Access Art is built upon the premise that disabled bodyminds have an epistemic and organizational privilege concerning their experience and, therefore, hold an embodied understanding that puts them in an optimal position to design access practices. Such practices, therefore, fall far from standard accessibility programs that are offered to disabled folks as costumers and consumers, and foreground the agency of bodyminds to create what Liza Sylvestre denominates «Generative Forms of Experiential Access» (Sylvestre, 2023: 82), these forms are led by bodyminds with an experiential understanding of disability and « turn the tables on normative approaches to access, which often burden those who rely on access services and create inequivalent experiences to their normative counterparts» (Sylvestre, 2023: 83).

Such approach to accessibility requires the wisdom of disabled folks in significant positions of leadership that affect the design and decision-making processes of both artistic production and curatorship. Ensuring such leadership demands the installment of what Disability Justice denominates “incubators” for disability arts beyond inclusion in hegemonic artistic practices led by non-disabled bodyminds.⁷ Carmen Papalia finds a

⁷ Eliza Chandler, Carla Rice, Sean Lee and Max Ferguson have noted the role of Toronto-based organization Tangled Arts + Disability, founded in 2021, as an incubator for disability arts. Tangled opened

paradigmatic reorganizational practice of leadership of the most impacted within Access Art in the Reverb events at Gallery Gachet, organized by Horlick and McPhee between 2013 and 2017:

The model that brought life to the space that they envisioned was that, with each event, they would grow into a new accessibility feature ... At Reverb accessibility meant organizers would respond to the needs of the people around them and build trust with those who generously brought feedback to them by taking their guidance ... It meant *taking leadership from disabled, mad, d/Deaf, hard-of-hearing, neurodiverse, and sick and chronically ill participants who were Black, Indigenous, multiracial, or persons of color* so the accessibility practices that they adopted always reflected the needs of the communities that required them. (Papalia, 2023: 272-3, my emphasis)

The experiments in leadership of the most impacted enacted in Reverb show how, as Jennifer Justice has argued, Disability Justice's redistribution of leadership is powerful beyond building capacity in disabled communities, and has the potential of transforming museums into «places of those who have no part» through collaborative dynamics in curatorial design that «promises to breathe new life into community-centered exhibition programming» (Justice, 2023: 67).

3. Anti-capitalism

Capitalism depends on wealth accumulation for some (the white ruling class), at the expense of others, and encourages competition as a means of survival. The nature of our disabled bodyminds means that we resist conforming to “normative” levels of productivity in a capitalist culture, and our labor is often invisible to a system that defines labor by able-bodied, white supremacist, gender normative standards. Our worth is not dependent on what and how much we can produce. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 23-24)

3.1. Origins

When the ADA was passed in 1990, the right to employment for people with disabilities was a central demand, and for this reason the act included five Titles dedicated to increasing access to waged labor and decreasing workplace discrimination. Disability Justice does not dream of labor. Since the implementation of the ADA regulations, which

its programming with the exhibition *Undeliverable*, curated by Vancouver-based nonvisual artist Carmen Papalia, and continues to be an active force in providing disability-led initiatives and artistic projects in Canada. As the authors note: «Alongside programming Mad, d/Deaf, and disabled artists, Tangled recognizes the importance of cultivating disability leadership as a redress to the distinct lack of disability-led leadership opportunities in the Canadian artistic sector ... actively giving leadership roles and mentorship opportunities to early-career artists and cultural workers—an integral part of mobilizing one of its core goals of cultivating disability culture» (Chandler *et al.* 2023: 209).

were based on a paradigm of inclusion and accommodation to waged work standards of productivity, Disability Justice has moved towards a more radical critique of capitalist conceptions of work and labor. To understand the need for this shift of paradigm, some historical background on the consequences of the inclusion into the waged workforce of bodyminds with disabilities must be introduced. Namely, the failure of the ADA regulations to guarantee livable standards due to the subminimum wage section of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the need to rely on underground economies as a means for survival, and the endurance of a separation between qualified and unqualified individuals with disabilities that deems the latter as disposable. Due to these effects, Disability Justice's principle of anti-capitalism embraces an anti-work ethos – if we understand work in the limited conception of wage labor that contributes to the growth of capital – and challenges the value system underlying capitalist economy, which values bodyminds in virtue of their productivity. Alternatively, Disability Justice rejects joining into capitalist workforce and vindicates dismantling productivity-based measures of citizenship, participation, and democracy – emphatically championed in the US (Galer, 2012; MacGregor, 2012). As Lorelei Lee puts it, equating bodyminds' value with their productivity in the job market reinforces ableist and sanist prejudices against disabled folks who do not want to destroy themselves for a job:

Work is central to public understandings of social membership in the United States, so much so that the legitimacy of one's claim to a job is often used as a proxy for legitimate claim to residency as in when people say immigrants are stealing American jobs. So, where does this leave people like many of us who are disabled, who aren't or can't be part of what's traditionally under the workforce? Do we have to be workers to be part of the American social body, and then the last question was like can we imagine a different way of calling for our liberation? (Lee, 2021)

By proposing a deep reconsideration of our value system upon which we assess bodyminds' worth, Disability Justice anti-capitalist principle goes beyond a critique to an economic system, constituting a serious philosophical revolution that reclaims how «we all need to visualize and strive for a society where we work less and care more for our bodies and communities» (Jones, 2022).

First of all, Disability Justice's anti-capitalist principle is a direct response to the failure of the ADA regulations, which were grounded on a rights-based activism for people with disabilities, to guarantee livable standards. There are three major causes to

which this failure can be attributed. The first one was the backlash the ADA caused to employers who were required to find reasonable accommodations for “qualified individuals with disabilities”, defined as is a person who, «with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position that such an individual holds or desires» (S.993-101st Congress, Title II, Subtitle A, Section 201, 42 USC 12131). These accommodations had the aim of ‘integrating’ people with disabilities into the workforce (DeLeire, 2000: 694) and could be required as long as they did not cause “undue hardship” on the business, defined as «an action that is excessively costly, extensive, substantial, or disruptive» (Schall, 1998: 194). Despite being limited in its scope of employment rates and wages of men only, the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is a good indicator to point at the failed effect of the ADA on employment of men with disabilities: in 1995, the percentage of employment was 7.2 lower than before the ADA, and they continued to earn less than their non-disabled coworkers (DeLeire, 2000: 695). As Thomas DeLeire points out when analysing the backlash of the ADA titles on employment,

Although equal pay and equal employment opportunities are familiar ideas in civil rights legislation, mandated job accommodation, such as modified work schedules, equipment, assistance, or physical changes to facilities, imposes unique costs on employers ... The ADA imposes costs on firms that employ disabled workers, which may decrease the relative demand for their labor. An accommodation that increases the productivity of a disabled worker by more than its cost would be provided voluntarily by firms. Thus, many accommodations required under the ADA represent net costs to firms and may decrease the number of disabled workers these firms choose to employ. (DeLeire, 2000: 694)

These net costs would account for the employers’ resistance to hire people with disabilities even after the ADA was passed in 1990 and signals the shortcomings of the legislation concerning its first broad goal, which was facilitating access to the job market for people with disabilities (DeLeire, 2000: 695). The second broad goal of the ADA titles on employment discrimination was an antipoverty agenda that aimed to improve the living standards of people with disabilities (DeLeire, 2000: 695). This agenda was hindered by the approval of Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) which regulated the circumstances under which employers could request ‘special wage certificates’ to pay certain employers a wage below the federal minimum standard (Maurer, 2011). Section 14(c) has often been justifying by arguing that allowing such a low wage grants access to the job market to people who would otherwise be barred from

it due to their inability to comply with productivity standards. However, as Carli Friedman argues, this affects negatively people with disabilities who are thought to be less productive because of ableist prejudice, thus resulting in «some companies pay[ing] people with disabilities a subminimum wage while doing the exact same job as nondisabled workers who are paid above minimum wage ... Subminimum wage hinges on stereotypes about ability and productivity» (Friedman, 2019). The third limitation of the ADA regulations on employment, which it shares with the first wave of Disability Rights movement, was how it was developed under a single-issue approach to disability, unifying and homogenizing the experiences of oppression and discrimination in the workplace without taking into account other social identities that radically alter access to work. Sex work researcher Angela Jones points out how

racism, sexism, cissexism, and transmisogyny shape workplaces and exacerbate these labor issues for people experiencing intersectional forms of disadvantage. Thus, despite commonalities among disabled workers' labor experiences, an intersectional analysis is critical to understanding how various axes of oppression shape disabled workers' motivations for choosing sex work and their labor experiences. (Jones, 2022)

In the rights-based approach of the ADA, the effects of class, race, and gender on the experience of employment discrimination were erased in favor of a stand-alone standpoint which cannot account for significant differences in the modes of violence experienced by people with disabilities. For instance, concerning class differentials, Jenny Dick-Mosher's analysis (Dick-Mosher, 2015) found that «working-class people with disabilities who perform blue-collar work were likelier than those in white-collar jobs to be denied accommodations and harassed. Women were twice as likely to report harassment» (Jones, 2022).

When the Great Recession after the financial crash and crisis of 2008 caused generalized politics of austerity around capitalist regimes, the consequences mentioned above were greatly aggravated (McRuer, 2018: 16).⁸ Fifteen years after the financial crisis, it is clear that the tendency toward spending cuts and tax increases has established

⁸In *The Politics of Austerity: A Recent History*, Burton narrates the rise of austerity rhetoric and measures globally after 2008, providing its historical precedents as well as an in-depth analysis of the cases of the Baltic states, Sweden, Canada, the UK, and the US. Burton argues that «austerity or 'belt-tightening' takes place two years after the start of a financial crisis and recession, is then followed by a decline in GDP for two to three years, then a rebound in growth even while austerity continues» (Burton, 2016: 107) and eventually becomes a full-term or even permanent policy.

itself as a long-term policy in globalized capitalist economies, establishing what Burton denominates as ‘scarcity’ instead of austerity (Burton, 2016: 104). Austerity measures increased the vulnerability of people with disabilities to poverty and homelessness, causing both deaths by lack of healthcare and mental health services, and resorting to suicide.⁹ Instead of addressing the multi-factor causes of suicide within populations with disabilities, governments erased the intersectional systems of oppression to which disabled folks are vulnerable – appealing to a medical model of disability, attributing suicidal ideation and attempts solely to health conditions, pain, and somatic strain. As a response, they did not ameliorate the living conditions of people with disabilities addressing the roots of socio-economical discrimination, but rather institutionalized suicide in “neoliberal thanatopolitics” (Grue, 2022). In the US, through euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide (PAS) in cases appealing to autonomy, dignity and freedom (Grue, 2022); and in Canada, through Bill C-7 of Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) (Department of Justice Canada, 2021). Jan Grue has examined the connection between neoliberal thanatopolitics (that increased majorly after the financial crisis) and a wider embracing of capitalist production as a measure of the value of a person socially:

Ever since the global financial crisis of 2007-08, and in many countries well before then, economic inequality and unequal vulnerability have increased in tandem. As the rhetoric of freedom has grown ubiquitous and become conflated with the consumer's freedom of choice, actual autonomy in biopolitical matters has arguably been restricted for vulnerable groups. This applies to the neoliberal regimes of the United States and the United Kingdom, but also to the varieties of social democracy in continental Europe and Scandinavia. The late 20th century model where many entitlements were more or less automatically legitimized by embodied vulnerability, as filtered through the matrix of medical diagnosis, has been extensively undermined as states' exemption criteria for "fitness for work" have grown narrower. The UK provides a particularly grim example of this narrowing, and the consequences have been dramatic. Since the introduction of austerity in the UK, thousands of citizens with disabilities and chronic illnesses have died while being found "fit for work" by the state (Department for Work and Pensions 2015); the resulting precarity and hardship have been extensively documented ... Even in outlier countries such as Norway, where the impact of the credit crunch was more limited, concerns about increased immigration and demographic shifts mean that entitlements are increasingly tied to participation in the workforce, shifting the stigma/privilege balance towards stigmatization of non-workers. (Grue, 2022)

Not only stigmatization, but also actual financial hardship and suffering endured by people with disabilities due to a system that values bodyminds only in terms of their

⁹ «These measures, in the age of austerity– McRuer notes – are imposed to again spur capitalist growth that has stalled and to protect thereby the profits of capitalists through the crises» (McRuer, 2018: 16).

productivity within waged labor causes a disproportionated number of people with disabilities to apply to physician-assisted suicide (PAS). Therefore, state responses to poor living conditions legalizing PAS reinforce the value system that deems the lives of non-productive bodyminds as “not worth living” (Grue, 2022). As Grue argues, this underlying value system is obscured by the rhetoric that masks passive state subjects as «autonomous, rational and self-directing» and thus «presents death as a choice among many, but the real choice is binary» (Grue, 2002), i.e., committing suicide or enduring the ineludible hardship of being a worthless bodymind for a capitalist system. However, this inescapability only remains true if we accept the impossibility of imagining an alternative to capitalist-guided value systems, to echo Mark Fisher, if we accept that «it’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism» (Fisher, 2009: 1). Welfare cuts and austerity policies that aggravated the economic vulnerability of disabled people reinforced two narratives: first, that non-productive or not ‘fit for work’ bodyminds were necessarily vulnerable because of their individual circumstances, but second and most importantly, austerity discourse praising ‘belt-tightening’ contributed to a demonization of disabled people, who became suspects of taking advantage from health benefits and causing unnecessary costs (Ryan, 2019: 48). From this standpoints, disabled bodyminds «merit austerity, as they have no value and supposedly generate no value» (McRuer, 2018: 101). However, as Francis Ryan argues in *Crippled: Austerity and the demonization of disabled people*, vulnerability is not necessarily ingrained in disability:

Contrary to the cultural myths surrounding disability, it is not inevitable for people with disabilities to be afraid, desperate or isolated. Vulnerability comes when politicians choose to pull the support disabled people need in order to live dignified, fulfilling, independent lives—knowing full well the misery it will cause (Ryan: 2019: 8-9)

Disabled bodyminds are rather *made* vulnerable by policies that assume an underlying value system where disabled communities are “deemed disposable” (Clare, 2018: 5). Disability Justice challenges the dualist alternative within capitalist frameworks between productive bodyminds and worthless bodyminds that are better off dead, opposing most recently the expansion of access to MAiD in Canada through Bill C-7 in Canada. In the campaign *Death By Coercion*, Disability Justice activists denounced the lack of transparency in MAiD processes, which erased the real causes behind resorting to it. In a panel celebrated on February 1, 2021, organized by the Disability Justice Network

of Ontario (DJNO), Inclusion Canada, Disabled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN Canada), and Independent Living Canada, activists Syrus Marcus Ware, River Holland Valade, and Trudo Lemmens discussed the problematic rhetoric of autonomy and freedom used to back up Bill C-7. MAiD, they argued, exploited the suffering and the lack of autonomy caused by ableism, racism, and legislated poverty to allow the medical industrial complex to coerce disabled people, and specially «Black, Indigenous, Queer, Sick, Poor and incarcerated communities» into assisted suicide. Considering how «many disabled people in Canada cannot afford to eat, cannot afford prescription medications, and cannot afford an accessible place to live» the panel asked: «What does it mean for our governments to offer disabled people easier access to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) without offering disabled people adequate supports to live in Canada? » (DJNO, 2021).

Due to the limitations of the ADA regulations on waged labor, Disability Justice activism has felt the need to acknowledge the narrow scope of waged labor in relation to the kinds of work that enable survival for people with disabilities – which include underground labor, care work, and reproductive labor (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018a; Federici, 2021). Disability Justice's principle of anti-capitalism aligns itself with the idea that it is capitalist value systems that deem disabled people disposable, leading them to their death. As Marta Russell argues in *Body Politics: The Missing Link*, this results either from direct extermination or from coercion, through a supposedly free choice to assisted suicide while not providing any support to lead a livable life. Russell diagnoses «the oppression of disabled people as an inextricable constituent component of the capitalist mode of production itself» (Russell, 2019: viii). From this diagnosis, Disability Justice has faced the need to move beyond Disability Rights demands for access to waged labor and protests against workplace discrimination towards a radical shift of value measures which centers mutual aid and interdependence in front of waged labor-derived definitions of a bodymind's value in terms of productivity and individualism. As Dustin Galer puts it, «against this backdrop of radical individualism that lies at the heart of the mainstream liberal political economy, the disability movement seeks to conceptualize group identity partly through common experiences of exclusion and oppression» (Galer, 2012). Disability Justice rejects productivity as a measure of value within industrial capitalist systems and, despite recognizing how «narratives of people with disabilities

regarding their employment experiences and perceptions of work demonstrate the extent to which work is a central component in the process of individual identity formation» (Galer, 2012), Disability Justice activists vindicate alternative ways of constructing meaningful citizenship and social identities in a framework not based on waged labor:

Denied access to waged labor, as people with disabilities systematically are, undermines a person's identity as an active citizen and his or her ability to exercise social citizenship. A recalibration of the values associated with waged labor namely, independence, self-reliance and productivity would extend worth and identity to those systemically deprived of both, produce allies amongst historically disadvantaged groups, and benefit broader segments of society many of who grow disenchanted with the current distribution of wealth and power. (MacGregor, 2012)

Such recalibration, then, moves Disability Justice beyond “Adapt or Perish” (Russell, 2019: 202-5) towards imagining possible worlds where productivity or adaptability to capitalist demands are not the sole indicators of bodyminds’ social value and identity, where «human concerns and social orders get subsumed by a kind of economic tyranny» (Russell, 2019: 205). This possibility lies in the fact that capitalist value systems and social order are not necessary and fixed, but in order to imagine an alternative, Disability Justice demands to recognize the scope of aspects ruled by capitalist regimes, which are far greater than economic dynamics. In this respect, Federici’s analysis of labor beyond waged labor; and Nancy Fraser’s critique of “cannibal capitalism” provide a rich resource to weigh the philosophical shift entailed by Disability Justice’s principle of anti-capitalism, which I will argue affect first and foremost the fundamental yardstick of how bodyminds are socially valued.

3. 2. Kindred approach: Federici, Fraser and the end of Capitalism

Silvia Federici and Nancy Fraser share a revisionist approach to anti-capitalism from a Marxist perspective, which critiques mainly the limited scope of (1) an analysis of work that equates it with waged labor, and (2) of capitalism, which reduces it to an economic system of production. From this approach, they put forward the possibility of an alternative standpoint that redistributes the value of bodyminds not in terms of their productivity ratio and their integration into waged labor. Therefore, voicing demands from this standpoint – such as demanding wages for care work and reproductive labor – do not seek a conciliatory integration or adaptation into the governing capitalist regime,

but rather, they express the «potential to demystify the wage system insofar as it can draw attention to the arbitrariness by which contributions to social production are or are not assigned a wage» (Weeks, 2011: 128). The work of Federici and Fraser thus shows the contingency of how capitalism distributes the value and occupation of bodyminds, and opens the door to spaces where this distribution is alternatively governed by a primacy of interdependence and care, instead of the autonomy and productivity that are the governing principles of waged work. In the case of Silvia Federici, this challenge to capitalist ordering is aligned with a politics of the *commons* striving for

the construction of alternatives to capitalism that has begun in encampments and squares across the planet where, in ways replete with contradictions but also with new creative possibilities, a society of “commoners” is coming into existence, striving to build social spaces and relations not governed by the logic of the capitalist market. (Federici, 2021: 51)

In order to set the conditions of possibility for a value system that does not comply with capitalist divisions between productive and unproductive bodyminds, Federici vindicates the historical contingency of the kinds of work which fall within the scope of capitalism and the division between waged labor and domestic labor. She does so departing from Marx’s own conception of work, through a critical standpoint that questions the reductionist definition of work embraced by Marx, which she argues obliterates unpaid reproductive labor and erases the manifold dimensions of work in favor of a single-stand analysis of wage labor and production (Federici, 2021: 81). As Federici points out, by neglecting reproductive and care labor, Marx

failed to unmask the very presuppositions of classic political economy. Instead of revealing unpaid reproductive work as the source, indeed the “secret,” of the reproduction of labor power, he codified the separation between production and reproduction typical of the logic and history of capitalist development and the naturalization of the latter as “women’s labor.” (Federici, 2021: 81)

For Federici, this silence constitutes a conscious obliteration of a central discussion that was taking place in socialist, anarchist, and feminist circles in the 1830s concerning housework – with women claiming the reproductive value of domestic work. In contrast with Marx, Federici argues that housework should not be naturalized, since it was defined and gendered only in contrast with capitalist ideals of industrial work, «a historically specific type of work, a product of a separation between production and

reproduction» (Federici, 2021: 39) socially produced by the distribution of the sensible that governed capitalist regimes. For Disability Justice's anticapitalist principle, Federici's emphasis on the historicity of capitalist separations between kinds of work into value differentials is relevant to the extent that it makes it contingent to value bodyminds solely in virtue of their workforce's productivity. Historicizing this difference allows a distance that makes it possible to imagine a distribution of occupations and value where a manifold of activities is considered valuable labor. This labor may range from caring for each other in the many ways we perform to sustain each other's lives, to reproductive labor, to labor that satisfies not only material but also spiritual and emotional needs. This contrasts with the reigning value system that establishes wage labor as the only contributor to fulfilling needs, due to an absolutist conception of the economy as the only value structure that can hold transactions between needs and goods. As Nancy Fraser argues in *Cannibal Capitalist*, the separation between wage labor and domestic labor and care was legitimized by the imposition of money as the only credential of value, that is, the assumption that if something is valuable it must have an exchange value translated into an economical cost. In turn, this transformation of value scales affected the social participation of those who fell out of economic circuits, causing a lack of recognition and a dynamic of domination and dependency to those who were part of the capitalized workforce:

With capitalism ... reproductive labor is split off, relegated to a separate, "private" domestic sphere where its social importance is obscured. And in this new world, where money is a primary medium of power, the fact of its being unpaid or underpaid seals the matter: those who do this work are structurally subordinate to those who earn cash wages in "production," even as their "reproductive" work also supplies necessary preconditions for wage labor. Far from being universal, then, the division between production and reproduction arose historically, with capitalism ...taking different forms in different phases of capitalist development. (Fraser, 2022: 10)

Since the division of kind of work "arose historically" and has mutated across history, it is possible that other divisions of the manifold activities involved in productive and reproductive labor may arise. Reorganizing work, then, entails a redistribution of value where «activities and social relations that are most essential for the production of labor power, including sexual work, procreation, childcare, and domestic work» (Federici, 2021: 55) become central within our communities and afford a kind of recognition that ensures the social involvement and participation of all bodyminds,

including those who are considered unproductive and non-contributors according to capitalist reductionist labor standards. Imagining other divisions of labor, then, would mean imagining new societal orders that do not subordinate those who do kinds of work that does not generate profits for a capitalist system. It would mean, then again, to vindicate the inherent importance of reproductive workforce in sustaining life even *independently from* how it contributes to or makes possible the production of commodities and an economy based on exchange values.

The second reduction that leads to an exclusionary value system that measures bodyminds' worth in virtue of their productivity is an understanding of capitalism as a *merely* economic system – that is, to unearth how anticapitalism is demanded by Disability Justice movements if they are to dismantle the oppression of disabled folks in all the layers of societal order, we need to expand our conception of capitalism beyond a merely economic system towards an all-embracing system that is responsible for «not only economic crises but also crises of care, ecology, and politics» (Fraser, 2022: xvi). Only through this expanded conception of capitalism can we account for how its ordering affects bodyminds in their dimensions, and for how a reorganizational movement that opposes it is required if we are to build capacity for care from a standpoint that prioritizes interdependence in front of an individualistic productivity-based value system. This reorganizational movement must be based on an expansive drive for an all-encompassing change that builds solidarity among those affected by *all* crises generated by capitalist contradictions. As Fraser eloquently puts it:

the alternative we seek cannot aim to reorganize the system's economy alone. It must also reorganize the latter's relation to all those forms of wealth it currently cannibalizes. What must be reinvented, then, is the relation of production to reproduction, of private to public power, of human society to nonhuman nature. If this sounds like a tall order, it's our best hope. Only by thinking big can we give ourselves a fighting chance to vanquish cannibal capitalism's relentless drive to eat us whole. (Fraser, 2022: xvii)

In line with Disability Justice principles, both Fraser and Federici locate care at the center of this alternative system. Disability Justice considers capitalism as a supporting structure for ableism – as both Ashley Wiseman and Leah Lakshmi identify it –, in such a way that «you can't really talk about ableism without talking about capitalism» (Smalls, 2019). Likewise, Fraser and Federici analyze capitalism as an all-

embracing system whose internal contradictions have led to *all* crises, and therefore the three of these approaches share having serious reservations concerning state measures and capitalist institutions as a corrective to the lack of care resources and to the demolishing of «the forms of provisioning, caregiving, and interaction that produce and sustain human beings and social bonds – variously called “care”, “affective labor,” or “subjectivation”» (Fraser, 2022: 9). The principle of anti-capitalism entails then both an epistemic and a socio-normative shift that puts at the center of the conditions of possibility of a survival of a community and of social organization, respectively, a recognition of interdependent care that values individuals in terms of their ability for social cooperation and building capacity for care (Fraser, 2022: 8-9).

This proposal stands in sharp contrast with capitalist individualistic and single value criteria of value resting on productivity, which erases all work that is not integrated explicitly in the market of wage labor. Paradoxically, as Fraser points out, «wage labor could not exist in the absence of housework, child-rearing, schooling, affective care, and a host of other activities which ... maintain social bonds and shared understanding» (Fraser, 2022: 9) but also «nourish friendships, build political networks, and force solidarities» (Fraser, 2022: 53). This paradox, which Fraser denominates the *Care Crunch*, is defined as the «social-reproductive contradiction inherent in capitalism» also known as the *care guzzler*. The Care Crunch makes explicit how capitalist productivity “free rides” on care work and reproductive work as the main source to supply new generations of both workforce and consumers, while ‘cannibalizing’ it and refusing to recognize its value, leaving it *but only apparently* outside its regime of distribution as marginal – although *de facto* establishing state measures of control to highly regulate it. It is in virtue of this paradox that Disability Justice principle of anti-capitalism remains wary of state measures that try to compensate for the lack of value and for the capitalistically perceived unproductivity of disabled bodyminds, since Disability Justice recognizes the need for changing the whole approach if we are to build a system that can fight the current crisis of care that is suffocating all bodyminds, but specially and most gravely disabled bodyminds. As a response, Disability Justice artistic practices are staging modes of being in space and time that depart from a conception of worth that is not dependent on capitalist productivity, but rather that emerges from an inherent value of bodyminds that is then performed in a myriad of activities that are not limited to

commodity or capital production, but which also include care, pleasure, and community building.

3.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

The deep philosophical implication of anticapitalism within Disability Justice is *assuming* from the beginning the right to exist and thrive of disabled and Mad bodyminds; in addition to that, a new system of values is built which recognizes activities that fall beyond the scope of wage work – care, organizing, activist, administrative, or community work for example. As Patty Berne advocates, the radical shift resides in the assumption of worth that challenges meritocratic and productivity-based scales of worth that predominate in capitalist society (Berne, 2023). In Disability Justice reorganizational practices, such alternative is materialized in what Sins Invalid denominates “crip-centric liberated zones” that Shayda Kafai has theorized as follows:

A crip-centric liberated zone is a multidirectional community love practice. It is a place of our own creation where we, the disabled, queer of color many, can exist and thrive liberated from the oppressions that relegate our daily lives. When directed inward, the love practice of a crip-centric liberated zone gifts us with strategies for re-centering and decolonizing our bodyminds. When directed outward, the zone politically transforms the places we inhabit—even if temporarily—into hubs of communal bodymind witnessing ... The crip-centric liberated zone’s love practice grounds us in the reality and gut knowing that our bodyminds belong, despite the world’s insistence on erasing us. Centering cripness in such a space reminds us of the need for cross movement solidarity, for collective resistance, and for the unwavering valuing of our bodyminds. (Kafai, 2021: no page)

As a community practice, crip-centric liberated zones enact a resistance to capitalist distributions of the sensible insofar they are governed by a different set of values – a sense of belonging of all bodyminds that centers cripness as the shaping force of all social organization. As a consequence, crip-centric liberated zones entail a reorganization of space and time, and of bodymind’s occupations – in the sense of the place they occupy, where they belong; but also their activities, behavior, needs, and desires. In contrast with the strict separation between wage labor and reproductive work, where the latter is usually erased; in these zones, a temporary community gets to decide how to distribute their time in a free creative way. We, as a temporary communal hub, can decide to prioritize care work, or maybe idleness; we may decide to celebrate working from bed, or even just staying in bed. As Kafai notes, these zones focus on mutual aid in opposition to monetized

activities, building capacity for communal systems where non-monetized practices «carry collective significance» (Kafai, 2021: no page) and small actions in micro-care webs like «getting groceries for a friend, watering someone’s garden, collecting and sharing resources online, holding e-space with community members who are grieving» are collectively endowed with a liberatory potential. In Access Arts, these crip-centric liberated zones can be built either in very ephemeral instantiations of a social practice performance, but also in more enduring forms like long-term creative research projects or collaborations that build capacity for dreaming of disabled futures beyond capitalist standards of worth and value. This is not a utopian project that comes without conflict and tension, since «in the creation of crip-centric liberated zones, in the aspirational creation of spaces that honor collective access, everyone involved ... must engage in self-inquiry» (Kafai, 2021: no page). But it is precisely this predisposition to self-inquiry, to assessing one’s vulnerabilities, oppressions, and relative privileges, that opens a breach that may interrupt the constant reproduction of ableist-rooted capitalist violence against bodyminds that do not comply with the norms of productivity. Some anti-capitalist creative tactics to break with ableism’s «societally constructed ideas of normality, intelligence, excellence, desirability, and productivity» (Lewis, 2022) include the access check examined below, which takes as much time as needed – sometimes the whole assigned timeslot – of a meeting to disclose each one’s access needs (Papalia, 2023: 270); as well as making room for rest, naps and idleness even within the creative process. An exemplary Access Art practice that questions notions of value based on productivity is the curatorship of the exhibition *Indisposable*, by curator Jessica Cooley – it is of special interest the inclusion of the artwork *FRONTLINES OF ALL KIND*, which Cooley describes as follows:

a new video documenting artists Navild Acosta and Fannie Sosa’s endeavors and challenges during the pandemic. History, as well as the current criminalization of rest, highlights that race, class, and socioeconomic status are directly linked to the amount of rest possible—or even allowed—to those laboring during a time of pandemic and beyond. Working as the collective Black Power Naps, Navild and Sosa created a metacommentary on the question of what happens when the traditional, institutional creative process disallows self-care and rest? How can disabled bodies contemplate creation within institutions that reify the ways in which artists’ bodies have been deeply commodified as means of production? Yet such questions are familiar to BIPOC identities, already pathologized as “lazy” for desiring rest and self-care. (Cooley, 2023: 38)

The vindication of rest will become central when analyzing the temporal profile that we need to create in Disability Justice-informed Access Arts practices, which require a deep reconsideration of temporality that resists capitalist acceleration in favor of a pace that make life sustainable for all bodyminds.

4. Cross-movement organizing

Disability justice can only grow into its potential as a movement by aligning itself with racial justice, reproductive justice, queer and trans liberation, prison abolition, environmental justice, anti-police terror, Deaf activism, fat liberation, and other movements working for justice and liberation. This means challenging white disability communities around racism and challenging other movements to confront ableism. Through cross-movement solidarity, we create a united front. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 24)

4.1. Origins

The fourth principle of Disability Justice is cross-movement organizing. Although the list of justice and liberation movements listed in the principle may seem a coarse-grained checklist of social justice trends flourishing in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the alliances of Disability Justice activism with other movements, which can be traced through the public statements by Sins Invalid, dates back to 2009, when the movement began to gain momentum and grew beyond the San Francisco Bay Area. As founding member of Sins Invalid, Leroy Moore explained that year:

Sins Invalid is a groundbreaking performance event that celebrates the sacred nature of fierce desire and claims all bodies as beautiful. It is also a place where artists can share their political voice with others in our performance-based workshops, and where we invite discussion around race, embodiment, queerness and other identities that make up our work. Sins Invalid embraces issues of sexuality and embodiment around people with disabilities. Honestly, being disabled I thought I would never have a chance to put my thoughts out there on a platform like what Sins Invalid has provided. Like many individuals with disabilities, I didn't see this issue displayed in the media, taught in schools, or discussed in any other spaces when I was growing up through the 1980s. (Moore, 2009)

In Moore's narration about the expansion that Sins Invalid was experiencing in 2009, we can already find an explicit mention of «race, embodiment, queerness» and of ongoing discussions around sexuality issues. The collaboration with kindred liberation movements is built up upon the legacy of cross-movement organizing in the precedent movement of Disability Rights, which notably joined forces with Women's Rights and

Black Liberation to vindicate legal action by the government against discrimination based on race, gender, and disability.¹⁰ To follow the cross-movement growth of Sins Invalid, we can follow their history of posts published until now (May 2023). On September 4, 2014, the ‘Sins Invalid on Police Violence’ statement was published for the first time on the Sins Invalid blog. The original post was a reaction opposing Urban Shield after the death of Michael Brown of Ferguson, Missouri. Sins Invalid denounced the high rates of state violence, including police brutality and murder, disabled people of color, and queer/gender non-conforming people with disabilities suffer. The statement was republished after the murder of black disabled man Mario Woods by San Francisco police in December 2015; and a third time on June 20, 2017, to support the Stop Urban Shield rally organized in Oakland, CA after the death of Charleena Lyles, a pregnant Black woman with a mental health disability murdered by the Seattle police. Recently, on January 20, 2022, the statement was translated into ASL and published with an embedded video on Sins Invalid blog as part of its action of improving the articles’ accessibility.

After the statement against police violence in 2014, we can find an array of statements and events that follow the same pattern manifesting against oppressive dynamics or expressing solidarity with social justice movements. In 2017, Sins Invalid published a statement against White Terror and held an accessible event on Trans Life and Liberation. From 2019 until now (August 2022), there has been a change of pattern in the solidarity statements made by Sins Invalid, a change that I argue is significant to understand the cross-movement organizing principle of Disability Justice. Since 2019, all the statements follow the same formula with three elements: “A is B”, where there is always one of the terms filled by ‘Disability Justice’. We find five solidarity bonds expressed by the same formula:

1. ‘Fat Liberation is Disability Justice’ (February 13, 2019)
2. ‘Language Justice is Disability Justice’ (June 8, 2021)
3. ‘Disability Justice is a Politics of Peace’ (February 28, 2022)
4. ‘Reproductive Justice is Disability Justice’ (June 29, 2022)

¹⁰ Historically, there are notable instances of cross-movement solidarity between Feminism, Black power, and Disability Rights – specially during the 25 days of sit-in to enforce the passing of Section 504 in HEW’s San Francisco office, a section that prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability. In ‘Lomax’s Matrix: Disability, Solidarity, and the Black Power of 504’, Susan Schweik provides a nuanced analysis of how the Chicano group Mission Rebels and the Black Panthers sustained the protestors with food and hot dinners, in an alliance with disability activism. Schweik argues that this coalition shows how social movements can extend the resistance frames created by prior movements to establish themselves. (Schweik, 2011)

5. 'Disability Justice is Climate Change' (July 7, 2022)

It is worth noting that two statements were published as a direct response to specific socio-political contexts: the statement on Politics of Peace was a direct reaction to the Russian war against Ukraine which began on February 24; and the one on Reproductive Justice responded to the United States' Supreme Court overturning *Roe vs. Wade* on June 24, ending the constitutional right to abortion access. I argue that the radical formula of solidarity "A is B", which sets a form of equity that identifies one movement with another, is a call for reciprocity by Disability Justice to be considered an equal ally within other movements that disregard it. I will draw on Caleb Luna, Patty Berne and Bianca Laureano conversations around Fat Liberation and Disability Justice to explain why such a call for reciprocity is necessary for DJ. In a discussion held on a Facebook Live at the Sins Invalid page on February 26, 2019, Patty Berne discusses with Luna and Laureano the crossover between disability identity and fat identity, as well as the reasons why Fat Liberation has a resistance to share a united front with Disability Justice. These reasons, I argue, can be extended to the resistance other movements have also had against DJ, which accounts for why it remains somewhat marginal in Social Justice discourses. In solidarity as established by the DJ principles, there is a demand for reciprocal recognition and mutual aid which is not the same as the unilateral recognition that takes place in charity. This recognition entails understanding the other's perspective and fighting for a state of affair that we both find more joyful and less harmful than the current reality. The mutual aid and recognition demanded by cross-movement organization can find a historical precedent in Feminist demands of recognition from class-centered liberatory movements, in a trend that demands coalition in difference, in front of separations.

4.2. Kindred approach: Feminism for the 99%

Although in fact Disability Justice principles chronologically precede it, we can find a developed argumentative resource to make sense of the principle of cross-movement organizing in the manifesto *Feminism for the 99%* (Fraser *et al.*, 2019). We can understand the formulation "for the 99%" as an equivalent to the Disability Justice dictum of "leaving no one behind". The animating force behind both principles – the 99% feminism and call for cross-movement organizing in DJ – responds to a precedent of

exclusionary logic functioning within each liberation movements. In the case of Disability Justice, cross-movement organizing becomes urgent and necessary in front of a trend of Disability Rights which left out Black and Indigenous disabled folks of color, LGBTQ+ disabled people, and many other segments who remained in the margins of the movement due to their vulnerability to other systems of oppression. In contrast, the pioneering protests of Disability Rights privileged white cisnet¹¹ men and those who had visible disabilities, most notably wheelchair-users who posited disability as a single-focus issue. As Patty Berne argues when discussing what Disability Justice brought in contrast with Disability Rights perspectives of activism:

I think Disability Justice as a framework understands disability within a social justice context understanding that we all live in multiple power relations. So, within white supremacy, within patriarchy, within capitalism, within heteronormativity, within enforced interbinaries. We're also living with anabolism and all these different oppressions, structural oppressions interact with each other, and rather than centralizing one ... because you know, what the disability rights movement did was really centralize disability almost to the invisibilization of other identities ... It makes sense because the people that were leading were white and middle class, and that was their primary focus perhaps of marginalization, but when you're a disabled woman of color, there are many, many ways that we get undermined both individually and collectively. ... We come in various forms and shapes and at the same time, because *the disability rights movement is essentially an assimilationist movement*, it didn't want to bring the bodies complexities into the political so to speak. It kind of maintained the privacy around how we are distinct when we have nonconforming bodies, non-normative bodies. (Berne & Wong, 2015, my emphasis)

Therefore, Disability Justice distinguishes itself from Disability Rights when claiming its requirement for cross-movement organizing insofar it constitutes itself as (1) anti-exclusionary, taking into account that disability is not a single isolated issue, but rather is constantly in interplay with other identities and ways of being in the world, (2) and that each of this differences must be considered as a shaping force in the experience of disability —«when you're a disabled woman of color, there are many, many ways that we get undermined both individually and collectively» (Berne & Wong, 2015)— and thirdly, (3) Disability Justice aims to weave alliances with liberation movements while at the same time firmly rejects assimilation to disabling capitalist infrastructures and

¹¹Cisnet refers to those who identify as «being cisgender (= having a gender that matches the body you were born with) and heterosexual (= sexually attracted to men if you are a woman and women if you are a man)» (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

institutions, an integration that Disability Rights asked for as a measure of ‘normalization’.

Correspondingly, in *Feminism for the 99%* we find an argumentative in favor of not treating liberation movements as ‘stand-alone’ movements. A separationist approach to feminism, they argue, which distances and isolates gender violence from other forms of violence, obscures their common root – which the authors of the manifesto locate in the capitalist managing of bodies and occupations. Such obscuring promotes a homogenization of experiences that creates a universal subject of the movement from which the vast majority is excluded. As they claim, a single-standpoint or “stand-alone” feminism erases class and race and «links our cause with elitism and individualism ... it associates us with policies that harm the majority and cuts us off from struggles that oppose those policies» (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 12). In contrast, a feminism for the 99% recognizes that the subject of feminism is not homogeneous, takes into account the manifold dimensions of experience and therefore acknowledges the complexities that arise from embracing cross-movement solidarity:

Treating what is really the goal of a political process as if it were given at the outset, [stand-alone feminisms] convey a false impression of homogeneity. The reality is that, although we all suffer misogynist oppression in capitalist society, our oppression assumes different forms. Not always immediately visible, the links between those forms of oppression must be revealed politically—that is, through *conscious efforts to build solidarity*. Only in this way, *by struggling in and through our diversity*, can we achieve the combined power we need if we hope to transform society. (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 46)

Locating solidarity and cross-movement organizing as the goal and not the premise, *Feminism for the 99%* provides a sound argument for the struggles within Disability Justice to built alliances not only with other liberation movements but also with historical Disability Rights collectives who champion a stand-alone view of disability. Following the same line of analogy, we can make sense of such historical separationist approaches to Disability activism if we resort to the 99% thesis on the logic of *lean in* feminism.¹² Like Disability Rights, lean in feminism does not seek to transform

¹² *Lean in* feminism refers to a trend derived from Sheryl Sandberg’s book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (2013). This neoliberal branch of feminism embraces a notion of empowerment that is translated as economical and work success and praises effort and entrepreneurship as a corrective to the lack of representation of women in positions of (capitalist) power. Feminism for the 99% reacts to this trend as a false feminism that seeks to integrate women in patriarchal systems of value harmoniously.

oppressive structures or to dismantle the root systems of gender violence, it is an assimilationist movement that normalizes and integrates a minority of women into positions of power under the guise of merit. Lean in feminism is therefore an umbrella term which includes forms such as *girl boss* feminism, social media celebrities, corporate gurus (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 12),¹³ all of which function with the same assimilationist logic. Likewise, Disability Rights stand-alone approaches to disability have promoted greater exposure to *inspiration* stories that celebrated normalization or even heroism of a few who, through an apparent meritocracy, achieved goals that could be valued by the hegemonic system of worthiness and productivity: e.g., getting outstanding jobs or athletic accomplishments. These stories of self-improvement are the mirror image of *girl boss* stories of women who climb the corporate ladder and become CEOs of multinational corporations. In front of *lean-in* assimilation, a *Feminism for the 99%* claims:

Our answer to *lean-in* feminism is *kick-back* feminism. We have no interest in breaking the glass ceiling while leaving the vast majority to clean up the shards. Far from celebrating women CEOs who occupy corner offices, we want to get rid of CEOs and corner offices. (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 13)

Similarly, Disability Justice confronts the assimilationist view of Disability Rights and inspirational stories of disability with a radical celebration of wholeness of *all* disabled bodyminds, fighting for their liberation in their own terms, which are opposed to logics of normalization and integration. Like *99%*, Disability Justice activists do not want to be assimilated into a capitalist system that is violent, oppressive, ableist, and which measures the value of bodyminds in virtue of their productivity. For this reason, it distances itself from oppressors and recognizes the need to join forces with liberation movements for justice, especially «with left-wing, anticapitalist currents of those movements that also champion the 99 percent» (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 54), to «broaden the circle of solidarity among the oppressed and sharpen our antagonism to our oppressors» (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 46)

¹³ I would add to the list self-care and self-love feminism, which rely on a hyper-individualistic conception of the self and aim to replace mutual aid and communities of care with an entrepreneurial conception of the subject and the body which often profits from diet culture, even if it is under the mask of care. As Ayesha Khan has argued, «we need to dismantle self-care» because «Self-care today is often reduced to: i) consumption of products, ii) neglect of community and erasure of the contributions of other beings who enable our care, and iii) one-sided, transactional extraction of care with a sense of entitlement to receive care without reciprocity or without focusing on daily practices of giving care in community» (Khan, 2023).

However, notwithstanding the noted correspondence between Disability Justice principle of cross-movement organization and the theses of *Feminism for the 99%* in terms of political organizing principles, we should acknowledge how, when it comes to content, in the *99%* manifesto disabled women are only mentioned in one passage (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 14), and how ableism is not explicitly contested in any of the eleven theses. The aforementioned passage claims:

Eschewing half-measures, the feminism we envision aims to tackle the capitalist roots of metastasizing barbarism. Refusing to sacrifice the well-being of the many in order to protect the freedom of the few, it champions the needs and rights of the many-of poor and working-class women, of racialized and migrant women, of queer, trans, and disabled women, of women encouraged to see themselves as "middle class" even as capital exploits them. (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 13-4)

Despite this call for cross-organizing with working-class, racialized, queer, trans and disabled women, the fact that the manifesto does not address ableism as one of the key systems of oppression that a feminism for the 99% must confront is a symptom of how movements working for justice and liberation need to be challenged by Disability Justice in order to assess internalized ableism that might be preventing them to join a common front that does not leave disabled bodyminds behind.¹⁴ It is precisely to fulfil this expansive mission that come from within the movement that the principle of cross-movement organizing becomes necessary in any Disability Justice practice.

4.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

In the Sins Invalid conversation, Laureano opens up about how she had a resistance to claiming the disabled identity and how it was a mourning process and a shift in the relationship she had with her body, admitting that she only recently identified as disabled and that she adopted this identity after recurrent pressures of the medical industrial complex which correlated a fat aging body with disability. For her, identifying as disabled

¹⁴ The manifesto addresses many forms of violence the denounce of which is shared with Disability Justice, among which we can enlist: capitalism (Fraser *et al.*, 2019: 16), neoliberalism (19), gender oppression and racial oppression (20), carceral violence (30), environmental violence (31), patriarchy, homophobia and sexual repression (34), racist, colonialist, and imperialist violence (40), police violence and white supremacy (41), and dispossession (54). However, there is a remarkable omission to mention ableism, a lapse that is found again in landmark conceptualizations of ecofeminism, where the distinction between able/disabled is absent from the list of dualisms that structure hierarchical systems of differential value and oppression (Plumwood, 2003: 43).

was an added complexity to the paradox of hypervisibility and invisibility that she already inhabited as a fat body navigating an ableist and fatphobic world.

Luna develops this paradox further when discussing “superfat erasure” (Luna, 2019)¹⁵ and the crowding of smaller fat bodies in Body Positive discourses. In it, he states how some reimaginings of the bodies are only apparent shifts because they only expand a normative standard body towards integrating those smaller fats who are still acceptable for liberal ideas of workforce, beauty and consumption. This broadening of the standard, Luna argues, remains fatphobic because it assimilates the smaller fats to body terrorist ideas of fashion and beauty: «I can’t count the number of times I’ve seen presumably fat positive articles circulating that are attempting to challenge ideas of fatness. Sometimes they will be claiming to praise the fashion sense of this group of people or provide proof that fat people can be attractive too» (Luna, 2019), thus still marginalizing bigger fat people and perpetrating different degrees of thin privilege. Integration and visibilization of smaller fat bodies as beautiful and attractive, Luna concludes:

Often times, instead of challenging notions of body terrorism, visibility that focuses primarily on the smallest—and therefore most privileged—group of people can re-create what fatness should look like, re-stigmatizing those fat people who don’t look this way. (Luna, 2019)

We find the analogous phenomenon in the preeminence of white cis-male wheelchair-users in the first wave of Disability Rights movement – which contributed to a social imaginary of hegemonic disability that excluded, marginalized and re-stigmatized other visibilities such as non-visible disabilities, mental health disabilities, or chronic pain; as well as diverse bodyminds with disabilities such as women, trans/queer bodyminds, and BIPOC with disabilities. We find the maximal expression of this preeminence in the International Symbol of Access, a blue square with a geometrical white stick-men wheelchair user. It is precisely this hegemonic, integrationist and narrow

¹⁵ ‘Superfat’ is a community-originated term that names those who were initially excluded from Fat Liberation – Cherry Midnight and Max Airbone have preserved the history of the term in a beautiful illustrated story with image descriptions (Midnight and Airbone, 2020). Max Airbone is also a pioneer in cross-movement organizing between Fat Liberation and Disability Justice – in January 2019, he co-founded Fat Rose, a collective which works towards crip- and fat-powered revolution (Airbone and Luna, 2020).

view of disability that the Disability Justice fourth principle reacts to when it calls for «challenging white disability communities» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 24).

In summary, the paradox of hypervisibility and invisibility can be explained as the phenomena which makes fat bodies receive an overload of attention, where they are perceived for example as more liable to direct touch and more ‘accessible’ by others as object; while at the same time they are invisible when their access needs must be covered, preventing them from access to many health resources for instance. This is a paradox that disabled bodyminds often experience as well in an ableist culture, and it is linked to social prejudices that make temporarily abled bodyminds to consider disabled bodyminds as less than human. According to Berne, Luna and Laureano, these degradation of the human status of both fat and disabled bodyminds is linked to a fear of death and a compulsion for health that has deep roots in Western culture’s Enlightened legacies. Therefore, there is a hypervisibility that makes others point their fingers to fat and disabled bodies in fear claiming: “This is the body I do not want to have!”, while at the same time showing a complete disregard to the needs of those bodyminds. In the 1999 American Studies Association conference, Robert McRuer coined the term *compulsory able-bodiedness* to explain the fear of disability that is culturally enforced upon us. He then developed it at the 1999 Modern Language Association convention, explaining how the terms mirrors Adrienne Rich’s term *compulsory heterosexuality*, which accounted for the ways in which heterosexuality was forced upon bodyminds by all institutions in a heteropatriarchal society, a compulsion that was materially translated into LGBTQ-phobias (Rich, 2003).

That is, compulsory able-bodiedness leads to a fear that manifests itself in the phenomena linked to the paradox of hypervisibility and invisibility of bodyminds of disabilities. While being deprived of agency and usually wronged as epistemic subjects, bodyminds with disabilities are usually vulnerable to what Mia Mingus has named *forced intimacy*. *Forced intimacy* is characterized in opposition to *access intimacy*, which Mingus describes as a transformative justice practice where there is a mutual understanding of access needs and a caring knowledge that enables us to be responsive to the other: «that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else ‘gets’ your access needs» (Mingus, 2011). Poles apart, forced intimacy is described as a kind of ableist violence performed on bodyminds with disabilities manifest through

disabled people being expected to share personal parts of ourselves to survive in an ableist world. This often takes the form of being expected to share (very) personal information with able-bodied people to get basic access, but it also includes forced physical intimacy, especially for those of us who need physical help that often requires touching of our bodies. Forced intimacy can also include the ways that disabled people have to build and sustain emotional intimacy and relationships with someone in order to get access—to get safe, appropriate and good access. (Mingus, 2017)

Therefore, forced intimacy encompasses all the violent ableist practices that foreground hypervisibility as a requirement to sustain our lives. This forced hypervisibility, which is not demanded for temporarily able bodyminds, is an «exploitative, exhausting and at times violating» ableist mechanism that conditions the participation of bodyminds with disabilities to many social environments, including other social justice movements. While ableist supremacy's forced intimacy mechanism operate within social justice, any possibility of caring cross-movement organizing will remain foreclosed. This gives rise to the question of what care-building practices can be performed to reframe other social justice movements from the lens of access intimacy instead of the demand of forced intimacy.

I argue that the paradox of hypervisibility / invisibility that disabled bodyminds experience, and which includes forced intimacy among its many effects, stems from the social enforcement of able-bodiedness, which creates a fear of disability and a phobia of abjection so visceral that it creates a resistance to mutual recognition between Disability Justice and other social justice and liberation movements. For this reason, cross-movement organizing is one of the ten principles of Disability Justice, and this is also why it is put in such a radical formula of identity as “A is B” in the multiple solidarity statements released by Sins Invalid. In terms of academic literature, the lack of mutual recognition and allyship that an identitarian view of disability has suffered until recently is palpable in the scarce literature on Black Disability Studies and Feminist Disability Studies. The resistance of these fields to incorporate the standpoint of disability is explained by Mobley and Bailey in their Black Feminist Disability Framework (Bailey and Mobley, 2019) in virtue of the hyper ability demanded from racialized bodies and especially from women of color:

Resilience is praised while trauma, violence, and pain are too common to actually be interrogated for very long. The logic of Black hypervisibility produces subjects that are barred from weakness—and disability in Western thought as figured through non-

normative bodies is the ultimate sign of unsuitability...Black people cannot afford to be disabled when they are required to be phantasmically abled in a white supremacist society. By bringing disability studies and a Black feminist theoretical lens to address this myth, scholars are better able to explain Black people's reluctance to identify as disabled and potentially offer new strategies for dismantling ableism within Black Studies. (Bailey and Mobley, 2019: 22)

This resistance has prevented both intersectional analysis that takes into account disability as a shaping dimension of a person, as well as cross-movement organizing, although this collaboration could lead to a mutual reinforcement and enrichment for the two parts involved. For instance, in her analysis of the role of disability in Chicana Feminist writers, Suzanne Bost argues how it is «particularly counterproductive for feminism to condemn weakness and vulnerability as tragic impediments. Gaining equal footing should not require static corporeality» (Bost, 2010: 105). How can Access Art contribute to the realization of such solidarity bonds with justice movements? I will argue that Access Art is a privileged ground for dismantling compulsory abled-bodiedness because it creates configurations where ableist stigma is bracketed in such a way that the deficiency model of disability does not function, and we can imagine *joyful* disabled lives through *pleasure* access practices.¹⁶ This joyful pleasure is a kind path to weave threads that connect Disability Justice to other liberation movements, which otherwise might remain resistant to cross-movement organizing.

5. Recognizing wholeness

Each person is full of history and life experience. Each person has an internal experience composed of our own thoughts, sensations, emotions, sexual fantasies, perceptions, and quirks. Disabled people are whole people. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 24)

5.1. Origins

The fifth principle of Disability Justice echoes the activist slogan “Disabled people are whole people”. Despite its apparent straightforwardness, the principle of wholeness requires a nuanced unweaving that makes palpable its political implications when shaping reorganizational practices and its *raison d'être*. The central thesis within the

¹⁶ The central role of pleasure in the potential of Access Art can also account for the emphasis on sexuality vindicated by Sins Invalid founder Leroy Moore in his aforementioned 2009 text. Concerning the principle of sustainability, I will develop how Access Art practices are connected to Pleasure Activism, a term coined by adrienne maree brown (2019).

argumentative of this principle is that wholeness dismantles the hierarchical dualism between perfection/imperfection, which serves as a basis for other dualities such as perfection/lack and perfection/abjection. These pairs of correlatives locate in the inferior pole ways of being in the world characteristic of disabled bodyminds, and thus justify forms of oppression and dehumanization of the latter. Given this, we must consciously avoid identifying wholeness with integrity and perfection, thus inscribing the discourse in paradigms of disability as a lack or deficiency that differs from the completeness of temporarily able bodyminds. I will trace back the genealogy of discourses of wholeness to historical moments that have significantly hindered and harmed disability rights in favor of what McRuer has denominated *compulsory able-bodiedness* (McRuer, 2002; McRuer, 2006), extended in Crip Theory by Alison Kafer with *compulsory able-mindedness* (Kafer, 2013).¹⁷ To understand how wholeness constitutes a radical alternative to dualist conceptions of perfection and imperfection that ground the deficit model of disability, I will present how this model has been used to ground oppression and dehumanization of people with disabilities. It is worth noting that the vindication of wholeness is distinct from Disability Justice, in contrast with allegedly progressive conceptual and representative frameworks for disability, such as theories of abjection, which are still ascribed to the deficit model.¹⁸

¹⁷ Both terms are modeled on Adrienne Rich's concept of *compulsory heterosexuality*, which accounted for the ways in which heterosexuality was forced upon bodyminds by all institutions through heteropatriarchal violence and sexual repression, see above the principle of cross-movement organizing.

¹⁸ Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection is exemplary of this dependency on a dualism between perfection/abjection. Kristeva's argument is formulated from a clinical psychoanalytic point *from* a non-disabled perspective and *for* a non-disabled readership, thus depleting people with disabilities – e.g. abjects – from any agency. In *Powers of Horror* (1982) abjection is characterized as an intrusion of the Real into the Symbolic Lacanian orders, and therefore this opposition is aggravated by separating 'integrity' and abjection into two qualitatively distinct orders: integrity belongs to the Symbolic order, where meaning-making, knowledge and culture reside; whereas abjection belongs to the Real order, that of animalistic, visceral trauma, obscure matter and lack of meaning. The rhetoric surrounding abjection renders it as *beyond* rationality and, since one cannot get a grip of it, the existence of the abject is erased from one's world (Kristeva, 1982: 1). Because of this liminal otherness, abjection becomes unthinkable and, consequently, *unrecognizable*: «abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory» (Kristeva, 1982: 5). Kristeva directly addresses disability as abjection in 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and... Vulnerability', where she argues that «the disabled person is inevitably exposed to a discrimination that cannot be shared» (Kristeva, 2010: 251). Grue refers to Kristeva's ascription to dualisms when she explains how «Kristeva's approach to disability reifies the very conceptual divides and experiential dichotomies she attempts to transcend. Disability is represented as essentially catastrophic and essentially tied to pain and isolation. This approach ultimately worsens rather than improves the grounds for social change». (Grue, 2013: 45). According to Grue, this hindering of social change is connected to Kristeva's ideal readership. Her implied reader «is emphatically non-disabled» (Grue, 2013: 48).

To understand Disability Justice's vindication of wholeness, we must consider how CDS and crip theories counterbalance the notion of a standard human nature that is modelled after compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2002) and the myth of perfection. In *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, Barry Allen uses "the myth of perfection" to describe the contingent and normative power structures that have oppressed people with disabilities to a precarious existence in "the human condition". According to the narrative of the myth of perfection, «impairment represents the tragedy that they hope they will never have to face» (Allen, 2008: 89). Due to the marginal character attributed to disability, a compulsory able-bodiedness is established as the normalcy, building the paradigm that Garland-Thomson has called the Normate:

The narrative of deviance surrounding bodies considered different is paralleled by a narrative of universality surrounding bodies that correspond to notions of the ordinary or the superlative ... The meanings attached to physical form and appearance constitute 'limits' for many people. (Garland-Thomson, 1997: 6)

A heuristic virtue of Garland-Thomson's paradigm of the Normate is its ability to account for notions of both "ordinary" and "superlative" figures of normalcy. Concerning the first, the Normate establishes ableist standards of fitness and physical form as the experience of the vast majority of bodyminds. For this reason, Allen also argues that «disabilism and ageism amount to the failure to recognize and to celebrate the frailties of existence to which we are all subject. Few of us will escape life without impairment» (Allen, 2008: 89). That is, the Normate creates a bodymind normativity that most of us will fail to comply with at some point, thus privileging the experience of a very limited group of bodyminds as the definition of the human condition. It is at this point that not only a dichotomy, but a dualism, as defined by Val Plumwood, is established between the Normate/abnormal;¹⁹ able/disabled; human/less-than-human:

A dualism is more than a relation of dichotomy, difference, or nonidentity, and more than a simple hierarchical relationship. In dualistic construction, as in hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed), the culture, the values and the areas of life associated with the dualised other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as inferior. Hierarchies, however, can be seen as open to change, as contingent and shifting. But once the process of domination forms culture and constructs identity, the inferiorised group (unless it can marshal cultural resources for resistance) must internalise this inferiorisation in its identity and collude in this low valuation, honouring the values of

¹⁹ On the construction of non-normalcy, we can resort to Foucault's *Cours au Collège de France 1975: Les Anormaux*. (Foucault, 1999).

the centre, which form the dominant social values ... Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change. Members of the following family of features are characteristic of dualism. (Plumwood, 2003: 47-48)

Concerning the definition of the human condition, the “narrative of universality” that the Normate attributes to ideal bodyminds corresponds to the function of homogenization or stereotyping that operates in the logic of dualism (Plumwood, 2003: 53-5), which enables us to explain the cultural development of classical and modern Normates: correspondingly, Da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man*, and Le Corbusier’s *Modulor*. These superlative instances of the Normate are described in Aimi Hamraie’s *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability* (2017). Hamraie notes the narrative of universality surrounding these Normates as follows:

A universal body has served as a template for the architectural user for centuries. This “mythic average norm” is not a neutral body but rather *a particular white, European, nondisabled, youthful, and often masculine figure* whose features remain unmarked ... Disability studies scholars and historians of science have argued that the concepts of “normal” and “average” are relatively recent phenomena, appearing in the nineteenth century with the birth of statistics to produce modern forms of power. As Lennard Davis concludes, the norm has a prescriptive function, which stems from its reference to real population data, unlike the earlier, classical notion of the “ideal” body, which referenced mythic figures divine in form. For Davis, this is what makes the figure of the norm insidious: when norms purport to represent “real” populations, it becomes possible to attempt to align those populations with the average, consequently making normates appear as natural or neutral.... In shaping the “real” population, norms become prescriptions for normalcy. (Hamraie, 2017: 20, my emphasis)

Although Hamraie focuses on histories of normalcy in science and architecture, we can find figures of normates across different cultural expressions, from literature to the medical industrial complex. As Mitchell and Snyder have argued (Mitchell and Snyder, 2001), the transversal presence of discourses of normalcy that establish a normative standard as the natural state of things occurs due to the narrative dialectical dependency on the disabled body or character in order to generate a narrative of normalcy and perfection. In other words, only in contrast to “deviance” does normalcy acquire meaning. Disability becomes then a necessary ‘prosthesis’ or ‘crutch’ for normative compulsory able-bodiedness. Ironically, after supporting itself on disabilities, normate figures are established as universal and used to oppress and marginalize bodyminds with

disabilities. In turn, these bodyminds with disabilities are also stereotyped and dispossessed from any specific traits, generalized and homogenized in a label of ‘otherness’ so that each ‘other’ is «a member of a class of interchangeable items which can be used as resources to satisfy the master’s needs» which facilitates «instrumentalisation and commodification» of the oppressed (Plumwood, 2003: 54). This dynamic of exploitation has very real consequences on non-normate bodies, which are devalued morally and aesthetically, and even excluded from the human condition by positivist practices, for instance, by anthropometry:

A positivist practice par excellence, anthropometry rendered the Vitruvian Man as fully normate: calculable, legible, a standard against which difference could be measured, and frequently, as in criminological and eugenic discourses, evidence of the supposed moral and aesthetic truths of normate bodies (Hamraie, 2017: 23)

Histories of normalcy and normates shape the build world in such a way that perfection and able-bodiedness become compulsory to navigate this world. However, normalcy and compulsory able-bodiedness omit the fact that as embodied cultural situated bodyminds we are *always virtually disabled*, because we are always at existential risk of failing to comply with standards of normalcy, which by the end of the nineteenth century the OED still defined as «physically and mentally sound; free from any disorder; healthy» (McRuer, 2014: 184). Therefore, I argue that the normate myth of perfection eludes the ever-changing phenomenological reality of embodied human bodyminds in such a way that it ignores the core dynamic character of live: on the contrary, perfection is a static concept of totality that pertains to lifelessness. Perfection is death. I find in the Nazi impulse towards bodily perfection a paradigmatic manifestation of the connection between a prescription for perfection as normalcy for all bodyminds and the destruction of life in a totalitarian ableist terrorism. In *Disability Aesthetics*, Tobin Siebers shows how Nazi ideals of bodily perfection are constructed in opposition to “degenerate” bodyminds, creating what he calls an “aesthetics of human disqualification” that lead to oppression of nonquality human beings (Siebers, 2010: 23).

The Great German Art works to achieve qualification for the German people by designing a specific though imaginary human type based on the healthy and able body. This type was proposed as the norm, and deviation from it tended to justify disqualification and oppression ... The Great German Art refuses variation by embracing an idea of human form characterized by exaggerated perfection and striking regularity. Arno Breker’s *Readiness* represents the perfect picture of health and ability, but it is deeply unreal and

stumbles into pure kitsch: its pumped-up body, thought classical by the Nazis, actually swerves away from its Greek models to present a profile and shape outside the bound of human form. Famously called Hitler's Michelangelo, Breker preferred to model his sculptures on the bodies of athletes [and] bodybuilders. (Siebers, 2010: 31-32)

In contrast with Breker's aesthetics of perfection, Modern artworks were censored and labelled as "Degenerate Art" because they showed feeble, unhealthy bodies that Nazi eugenics project aimed to annihilate. Siebers builds his case on the renowned historical event of the two exhibitions that occurred simultaneously in Munich in July 1937, the exhibition of degenerate art *Entartete Kunst* at the Institute of Archaeology, featuring Modernist artworks; and the Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung (Great German art exhibition) that was exhibited at the Haus der deutschen Kunst, showing the regime's artists' works, among them those of Arno Breker. In opposition to this static perfect bodymind understood as a totality that conforms to a hegemonic ideal Normate, I argue that Disability Justice's vindication of wholeness is a call for celebrating bodymind variations and for re-qualifying dismembering, fragmentation and abjection as part of the experience of human condition. In radical opposition to dualisms that naturalize the Normate and define other kinds of embodiment as deviant. CDS scholars have shown how it is power structures that 'disable' non-normate bodyminds as deficient or rejected, and impose an obligation to mask, rehabilitate or cure disabilities to recover a supposedly lost wholeness and bodily integrity which is judged as 'healthy'. Such dismantling of perfect/deficient dualisms is performed by Susan Wendell in *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability* and Eli Clare in *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling With Cure*. Both Wendell and Clare advocate for a reframing of disability that is not grounded on inclusion and rehabilitation, but rather on abolishing the binary opposition of ability/disability or health/pathology or perfection/abjection in favor of an understanding of human experience as a continuum of diverse modes of navigating the world depending on variations of bodyminds. This abolitionism of disabling dichotomies is the same aim that animates Crip Theory as a celebration of crip embodiments which has the potential to shape social change towards more accessible futures, as Alison Kafer claims

Thinking through accessible spaces and accessible futures means addressing the exclusions of feminist and queer political visions of the future, highlighting these theories' reliance on ideologies of wholeness [i.e., perfection or integrity], complicity in compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness, and marginalization of disabled people.

What is needed, then, is not only a trenchant critique of ableism but also a desire to think disability otherwise ... Our animating questions could then include the following: Who is included or excluded in our political imaginaries? How are “disability” and “disabled person” (or “woman” or “queer” or “race” or ...) being defined in these dreams of the future? Who has access to these imaginaries, and how is access being described? Which issues are being marked as feminist or queer or Crip? (Kafer, 2013: 153-4)

I follow Kafer’s critique to liberation narratives’ complicity in compulsory able-bodiedness/able-mindedness to vindicate Disability Justice’s principle of wholeness as dialectically more efficient than narratives that rely on the dichotomy of bodily integrity versus disabilities, and therefore fail to «think disability otherwise» (Kafer, 2013: 153). Contrastingly, I will argue that the principle of wholeness finds a kindred conceptual approach in John Dewey’s notion of human nature as growth insofar as it avoids the reification and naturalization of normalcy that characterize the deficit model of disability.

5.2. Kindred approach: Dewey on growth and human nature

What does it mean to conceive experiences of disabilities as wholesome? First, the principle of Wholeness entails dismantling the dualism between integrity and abjection, which is championed by most narratives of rehabilitation and cure espoused to the deficient model of disability. Here, Dewey’s conception of human nature, habit and growth has a hermeneutical potential to interpret how Disability Justice’s principle of wholeness constitutes a deep reconceptualization of how we understand what it means to be human – such alternative understanding is in turn a form of resistance within an ableist culture, insofar it can set the ground from reorganizational practices that show how perfect/deficient dualisms are contingent -not natural- and therefore these practices do not need to participate in overdeterminate hierarchies that stem from such dualisms (Plumwood, 2003: 47). In *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), Dewey challenges essentialist positions on human nature by arguing that what is characteristic of human nature is not a fixed stable nature, but rather the constant process of *growth*. Growth is understood as a learning continuous interaction between the individual and their environment, in such a way that they constitute each other relationally: the environment influences and shapes the conduct of the individual, and individuals modify the environment in which they live. It is, therefore, a process of co-creation, which makes individual bodyminds dependent on their context. In this process, habits are informed: as Blanken-Webb put it, for Dewey, growth is creative insofar it is «a process of reorganizing

habits as a consequence of an aesthetic response to disruption» (Holma, Kontinen, & Blanken-Webb, 2018: 223). This reorganization occurs in a dynamic relationship with stable aspects which are «an ability, an art, formed through past experience» (Dewey 1922/2008a: 48) that are formed in conjunction with the environment, in such a way that leave room for individual agency to reorganize oneself by modifying one's habits. This reorganization takes place as a process of growth. For us, Dewey's definition of growth is interesting for two reasons: (1) it allows a pluralistic understanding of ways of learning and building habits to navigate the world, and (2) it recognizes the simultaneously individual and social dimensions of this process of self-organization.

Concerning growth pluralism, for Dewey, there are many «forms of idiosyncratic and context-focused growth occurring in specific individuals» (Taff and Danforth, 2017: 471). Taff and Danforth caution against confusing Dewey's celebration of idiosyncratic individuality in growth with individualism. Individual growth takes place *in* society and is interdependent with the environment and human and non-human others. Individuality «recognizes and celebrates the unique capabilities and contributions offered by individuals as part of a reciprocal interaction within a social situation» valuing «the wholeness of complex individualities» (Taff and Danforth, 2017: 475). That is, it recognizes that there are many kinds of learners and many modes of navigating the world. This resonates with Sins Invalid defense of the *validity* of disabled embodiments as ways to be in the world, and with Carmen Papalia's notion of *nonvisual learning* experiences as epistemologically value experiments that reorganize our way of moving around the lived surroundings. For Dewey, growth is indeed a learning process, which constitutes the self in co-creation with their environments in a situated way, as he argues in «Democracy and Education»:

every individual has grown up ... in a social medium. His responses grow intelligent, or gain meaning, simply because he lives and acts in a medium of accepted meanings and values ... the self achieves mind in the degree in which knowledge of things is incarnate in the life about him; the self is not a separate mind building up knowledge anew on its own account. (Dewey, 1976[1916]: 295)

Therefore, we find that the pluralistic understanding of ways of navigating the world as habits resulting from individual growth is interconnected and cannot be separated from society, since it takes place *in* a social medium. For Dewey, individual

growth is a constant interaction between the individual and society: the individual can only grow and find fulfillment by contributing to a community. As a counterpart, society benefits from the individual processes of growth which lead to whole complex selves to the extent that «heterogeneous interactions enrich intellectual development» for the community, where «modes of associated living among diverse learners developed the practical capacities necessary for building and furthering democratic communities» (Taff and Danforth, 2017: 473). What implications does this conception of growth as both social and individual has for Disability Justice’s principle of wholeness? In valuing different habits and self-organization as valid paths of human growth, which can contribute actively to society through participation in communities, Dewey’s account of human nature enables us to accommodate disabled ways of navigating the world as *whole* human existences with political agency which, moreover, have a positive contribution in society in building a diversity of meaningful experiences. For Dewey, the «interchange of varying modes of life experience» (Dewey, 1976[1916]: 84) opens us up towards more democratic community organizations because they reveal new modes of establishing relationships and learning. In other words, it promotes social growth because «diversity of stimulation means novelty, and novelty means challenge to thought» (Dewey 1976[1916]: 85). Bringing this diversity of stimulation to Disability Justice’s approach, Dewey’s account of human nature as a process of context-focused growth and co-creation enables us to understand as whole and value diverse modes of being in the world, an argument that potentially provides a philosophical ground to movements within DJ, especially Disability Pride and Mad Pride. In what follows, I will raise the question of how Access Art practices can provide experiences of growth understood in a Deweyan sense by triggering self-organization of our habits perceptually, to show how such experiences can «challenge our thought» of the perfect integrity as a model human condition attributed exclusively to able-bodiedness and able-mindedness towards an understanding of diverse bodyminds as wholes, which is the core of the fifth principle of Disability Justice.

5.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

Revisiting Dewey’s notion of *aesthetic experience* from the open-endedness of growth and the contextual nature of experience – «our experience as it is actually lived under

present economic and legal institutional conditions» (Dewey, 1980[1934]: 21) – can help us to make sense of how Access Art practices and performance with Disability Justice are used as a tool to reorganize experience in such a way that the external and mechanical dualisms cease to operate, in a collectively agreed arrangement where bodies and occupations are governed by *other* principles – of wholeness, joy and pleasure – thus materially showing the contingency of disabling dualisms. Likewise, for Dewey, dichotomies that compartmentalize and organize experience into separated pigeonholes, e.g. perception and cognition, minimize the quality of what having an experience really means. It is worth quoting his passage at large:

We undergo sensations as mechanical stimuli or as irritated stimulations, without having a sense of the reality that is in them and behind them: in much of our experience our different senses do not unite to tell a common and enlarged story. We see without feeling; we hear, but only a second-hand report, second hand because not reinforced by vision. We touch, but the contact remains tangential because it does not fuse with qualities of the senses that go below the surface. We use the senses to arouse passion but not to fulfill the interest of insight, not because that interest is not potentially present in the exercise of sense but because we yield to conditions of living that force sense to remain an excitation on the surface. (Dewey, 1980[1934]: 21)

Seeking having an experience, then, is not to be understood as a search for a totality of coherence, in fact, I argue that an integrated experience as a correspondence between sensory stimuli stipulated by an ableist paradigm of integrity would remain *superficial* because it would continue to conceive sensations as «mere elements of knowledge» (Dewey, 1980[1934]: 21) instead of events valuable in and for themselves.²⁰ On the contrary, what Dewey is advocating for when defending *having an experience* is an experiential wholeness in the sense that all senses are internally and organically related to each other, a wholeness where fixed demarcations of the senses are abolished in order to pay attention to our embodied and embedded condition in the world, in the environment, *with* the others. Due to this experiential wholeness that characterizes

²⁰ Some interpreters of Dewey have read aesthetic experience as an integrated and closed experience. Notably, Richard Shusterman's Somaesthetics have problematized how Dewey's notion of aesthetic experience points towards closure in the sense that it is an integration of the perceived elements into a whole that brings an emotional quality «of some sort and so exceeds the threshold of perception that it can be appreciated for its own sake» (Shusterman, 1997:33). According to this interpretation, this phenomenological quality of having an individuated experience makes bodily aesthetic experience satisfying and fulfilling, we could even say appeasing, thus connoting closure and totality. However, from the paradigm of growth, we can challenge that Dewey's individuation of aesthetic experience entails such closed totality.

aesthetic experience, it does not rest on the surface, but lead to «a fulfillment that reaches to the depths of our being – one that is an adjustment of our whole being with the conditions of existence» (Dewey, 1980[1934]: 17). That is, aesthetic experience entails a reconfiguration of selves in their environment, and one that is so significant that it transforms their human condition and their situatedness in the world. The possibility of this reorganization, that is made palpable when experiencing a work of art, enables us to dream of futures that consist of possibilities, they are «anticipations of the future» which «come to constitute an esthetic ideal» (Dewey, 1980[1934]: 18).

In line with this argument, Dewey's aesthetic experience should always be considered from an embodied lens, avoiding reading it from a perspective that models aesthetic experience after vision. Understanding the wholeness of having *an* experience as the contingent organization that emerges from the interrelations of all our bodily senses into a sentiment of «deep realization of intrinsic meanings» (Dewey, 1980[1934]: 21) enables us to recover Dewey's aesthetic experience to account for Access Art practices of sensory reorganization as a privileged field for aesthetics. In other words, Dewey's consideration of the continuum between perception and cognition, and of having an experience as a multisensory reorganization of the self *in* the environment, avoids being tied to an ableist paradigm of integrity because it aims to dismantle dualisms, and celebrates somatic disorganization against the bad faith of fixed separated superficial categorizations of the senses and experiences. Dewey's "having an experience" is a hermeneutic tool that is aware of its contingency, and which aims to reframe our conception of experience in a way that recognizes how our division of "an experience" among the stream of live is just a step-stone to pragmatically order ourselves to function, just a habit is a point of stability within the constant reorganization of our bodyminds in the process of growth in order to function in society.

In this framework, the tactile dimension of having an experience emerges as a fruitful dimension to attend to as a temporary collectively held organization that can constitute a field of experimentation to reformulate collective and community-based practices of somatic care and mutual aid into new configurations of an experience that transform our relationships with the environment and with human and non-human others from a paradigm of wholeness, instead of from naturalized dualisms that support

structures of oppression. In Access Art practices, turning our attention towards tactility can provide ways to challenge institutional policies in the artworld because it provides new ways of engaging with human and non-human others (such as artworks) that differ from our everyday experience which is preeminently visually oriented. By generating paths of action through a variation on the way our bodies behave and feel, nonvisual and tactile aesthetic experience changes our standing point because they produce a dislocation in our habit body, forcing us to embrace the disorientation and fragmentation of a tactile relationship with the spatiotemporal field.

As it has been developed, the manifold senses of touch are multidimensional and difficult to be integrated into ‘an experience’, something that phenomenologically differs from the many strategies of unification and constancy of visual experience (for instance, color constancy). Therefore, touch is in itself a sense of dissent that can ground strategies to reorganize our experience according to logics that do not obey dualist logics of self/other; subject/object; and its associated conceptual weapons of *perfect/deficient*; human/non-human; normate/abnormal; civilized/animalized. From this standpoint, we can make sense of why many Disability Justice artists concerned with nonvisual experience have resorted to tactile strategies to challenge institutional artworld dynamics.

6. Sustainability

We learn to pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long-term. We value the teachings of our bodies and experiences, and use them as a critical guide and reference point to help us move away from urgency and into a deep, slow, transformative, unstoppable wave of justice and liberation. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 24-5)

6.1. Origins

The principle of sustainability in Disability Justice is the radical idea that bodyminds with disabilities deserve to be sustained in time by developing strategies to navigate an ableist dominant culture, and not to prolongate life for life’s sake, but rather because bodyminds with disabilities can have livable meaningful lives. Defending the long-term sustainability of bodyminds with disabilities means resisting a dominant paradigm of disability as a deficiency that has even historically advocated and fought for the termination of all disabilities, as Kafer argues: «Disability, then, is defined as a lack of productivity; in a

move that brings the word closer to its roots, being disabled means being unable to work ... We are all to be smoothly running engines, and disability renders us defective products» (Kafer, 2013: 54). When acknowledging this framework that promotes death by coercion of disabled bodyminds, defending the possibility, and even the *necessity* of disabled futures becomes a radical act. As Leah Lakshmi powerfully claims:

I believe in the disabled future. / This is a radical statement. Disabled people aren't supposed to be alive, take up space, exist—joyfully, complicatedly, thrivingly, orneryly—in the present. But the future? Nah. Double nah. / In the Bad Future of all kinds of dystopian imaginings, disabled people are either everywhere, with our pathetic, pain-filled, dysfunctional, broken bodyminds. We're the tragic autistic son in *Children of Men* who can't look up from his devices, the “disfigured” ugly babies produced by toxic waste and climate change. We're a cautionary tale told to children, warning them to fight climate change and fascism or just look what will happen. On the other hand, in so much utopian social justice-oriented science fiction, it's unquestioned that in the good utopian future, disabled people don't exist. Everyone eats organic, and disabled babies are eliminated before birth through genetic selection that no one ever calls eugenics. In the happy future, we're all dead. And isn't it better that way? / Fuck that. (Lakshmi, 2022: 8)

Within this subversive defense of disabled futures, the principle of Sustainability most notably refers to the kinds of temporal frameworks Disability Justice-informed futures demand. In front of urgency and acceleration, sustainability demands life-affirming infrastructures that enable livable paces for all those present.²¹ Black Trans Disabled author and activist Estelle Ellison condenses this proposal in the invitation to reflect on the question: «Can we respond with urgency to crises without settling for plans of action that leave participants vulnerable and unsupported in easily preventable ways?» (Ellison, 2023). That is, what forms of collective care and liberation that leave no one behind can be crafted to respond to the urgency imposed on us by capitalist expansionist structures that shape our lived experience of time in contemporary societies? As Ellison

²¹ It is worth noting that Sustainability is a reorganizing principle that affects temporality. Therefore, I include here a disambiguation that distances Sustainability as a DJ principle from the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Whereas the principle of Interdependence touches upon our relationship with human and non-human others, and therefore entails a reconfiguration of an instrumental mastery of natural resources which may resonate more with Agenda 2030, Sustainability is here used as a synonym for the endurance of bodyminds in time. Sustaining disabled bodyminds and crafting a futurity obviously presumes the preservation of an environment that hosts such bodyminds. But first and foremost the principle of sustainability is a subversive call for building livable existence and dreaming of disabled futures beyond the time of productivity and the “fetishization of longevity” – «challenging the fetishization of longevity, Kafer claims, seems essential to both queer and crip politics, both queer and crip theory» (Kafer, 2013: 40).

argues, it is precisely this accelerated structure of urgency that imposes on us what they denominate *time foreclosure*:

To foreclose time is to take time away. In this sense, taking time away is a restriction of agency. It is a means of limiting the number of conceivable actions available to us in response to oppressive power that is exerted upon us. By design, capitalism already does this—it enforces an order of time and it monetizes the intervals of time we give to the ruling class. We are made to be so dependent on monetized intervals of time, we face a never-ending uphill battle exerting our agency over how our lives look when we do not have a manager’s gaze upon us. Now, Time Foreclosure during fascism is an overarching societal strategy that produces both unintentional and intentional submission to oppressive power on multiple fronts. I offer this umbrella concept as a way of calling attention to the unique threats to a liberatory future that we are facing inside and outside of our respective radical circles. (Ellison, 2023)

In front of time foreclosure, Disability Justice demands a time that is open, malleable and attentive to the different speeds – these politics of time constitute a profound defiance to capitalist distribution of time, which responds to the only criteria of maximizing productivity. In response, Disability Justice-informed approaches to time, like Crip Time (Kafer, 2013:34-40),²² establish a temporality of illness and disability that is beyond linear time, considering how phenomenologically and chronologically disability affects temporal patterns: sometimes this means living in slow motion, sometimes it means reducing feasible productive hours per day, to take a rest when our bodyminds need it, sometimes it means acceleration and frenzy.²³ Ellen Samuels characterizes these oscillations as *time travel*:

²² Alison Kafer discusses the overlap between Crip Time and Queer Time in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. She argues that although disability and illness may indeed be springboards for *queering* time, in the sense of thinking time otherwise, or not as a linear homogenous progression, they should not be conflated. Crip Time has specific qualities, especially those related to the imagining of disabled futures. This ever-changing experience of projection – both in terms of personal life projects and of political collective utopias – is highly informed by specifically Crip temporal structures, among which it is worth noting the structure of diagnosis/prognosis. As Kafer notes: «The present takes on more urgency as the future shrinks; the past becomes a mix of potential causes of one’s present illness or a succession of wasted time; the future is marked in increments of treatment and survival even as “the future” becomes more tenuous. The strange temporality of diagnosis/prognosis seems all the more dislocating, all the more dis- and reorienting, for those falling out of or exceeding diagnostic categories. How might we understand the experiences of those with chronic fatigue and chronic pain, or those with multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS), struggling for years to find a medical professional or social services provider to recognize their impairments?» (Kafer, 2013: 37).

²³ Acknowledging Crip Time is an all-encompassing commitment that drastically transforms our relationships, both in institutional and personal environments: it entails a flexibility in medical appointments that recognizes the impossibility of some bodyminds to be on time, but it also entails tolerating slower speech without stigma, or not resenting loved ones for being late or cancelling plans. In Disability Justice spaces, especially those where many of those present are chronically ill or in pain, the

Crip time is time travel. Disability and illness have the power to extract us from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages and cast us into a wormhole of backward and forward acceleration, jerky stops and starts, tedious intervals and abrupt endings. Some of us contend with the impairments of old age while still young; some of us are treated like children no matter how old we get. The medical language of illness tries to reimpose the linear, speaking in terms of the chronic, the progressive, and the terminal, of relapses and stages. But we who occupy the bodies of crip time know that we are never linear, and we rage silently—or not so silently—at the calm straightforwardness of those who live in the sheltered space of normative time. (Samuels, 2017)

It is important to remark how the contrast established by Samuels between Crip time and normative time should not be read as a dichotomy between a pair of opposites: normative time's correlate would be a deficient time established as a failure to comply with normative time standards. Crip time dismantles this very opposition between productive/unproductive time as an equivalent to normative/deficient time. What it puts forward is a temporal sensory regime that consists of a way of *inhabiting time otherwise*. Therefore, it is not defined only in opposition to normative time and does not follow a dualistic logic of incorporation through relational definition (Plumwood, 2003: 52). As such, Crip time should be encountered as a fully independent and self-sufficient other, as a wholesome way of experiencing time instead of as a mere lack or absence in relation to normative time. The politization of time that derives from a vindication of Crip time as a valid experience can be framed within twentieth century and contemporary social justice movements that have claimed how the distribution of times is governed by power structures that deem which times count and which times are neglected – particularly significant in this trend has been the Feminist vindication of care time and care labour as part of a political time, in contrast with a neoliberal approach to time that only counts paid labor hours as meaningful and considerable socially, economically, and politically.²⁴

social isolation derived from failing to comply with pressures to commit to plans stands out as a major source of discontent. Crip Time not only affects those with disabilities, but is rather structural and reaches everyone and everything involved in experiences of disability. From the standpoint of care webs, Sarah E. Stevens has coined the nuanced term Care Time to a time where one «moves between the worlds of crip time and abled time ... Care time means living with this constant uncertainty and becoming adept to “code-switching” between the time zones, the crip and the abled» (Stevens, 2018).

²⁴ Concerning care labor and reproductive times, it is necessary to refer to Silvia Federici's work. I find her most successful analysis of the politics of time governing neoliberal capitalist patriarchal policies in *Patriarchy of Wage*, where she accounts for the politics of time that drain women's bodyminds in a regime that burdens them with two works, one of which does *not* count, and therefore does not exist for normative time: «Getting a waged job has never released us from housework. Having two jobs has only meant having less time and energy to struggle. Moreover, whether working full-time in the home or outside of it, whether married or single, we have to put hours of work into reproducing our own labor power» (Federici, 2021: 12). Against this disdain of care time and reproductive labor, Federici directs a bold demand: «*Up to now, the working class, male and female, has had its workday defined by capital—from punching in to punching*

The proposal of reorganizational practices that transform our way of inhabiting time as an activist tactic has been recently developed in liberation movements that demand livable rhythms for our bodymind, among which the Nap Ministry and Slow Academia are the most explicit proposals. These movements vindicate a readjustment of speed that values what a bodymind can do at each instant rather than abstract standards, timelines, and figures of productivity.

6.2. Kindred approach: Rest is resistance

Normative time does not only oppress bodyminds with disabilities. It drains all bodyminds in contemporary capitalism by demanding impossible standards of productivity as a requisite for mandatory success. This requirement does not come without guilt, shame and stigma for those who fail, who are burden with the consequences of this failure which are usually narrated as bringing on themselves any hardship because of their lack of commitment to a hard work ethos that would render them social escalation in a promised meritocratic order of things.²⁵ In such a grind culture,²⁶ taking time out and

out. That defined the time we belonged to capital and the time we belonged to ourselves. But we have never belonged to ourselves. We have always belonged to capital every moment of our lives. And it is time that we make capital pay for every moment of it» (Federici, 2021: 20) – a vindication which finds a precedent in Pat Mainardi’s statement *The Politics of Housework* (1969), where she claims that compromising women’s time with domestic chores that go unrecognized in the public sphere is one of the oldest forms of oppression. Such oppression is related to time foreclosure since, as Federici points in *Beyond the Periphery of the Skin*, the burden of both reproductive and wage labor leaves women without time and entails exhausted bodyminds: «Reports abound of women saying that they have hardly any time for themselves and live on the verge of a nervous breakdown, constantly worrying, constantly feeling rushed, anxious, or guilty, especially for not having enough time with the children, or having stress-related health problems starting with depression ... we have no time for love, friendship, and learning. Capitalism has made us lose sight of the magic of life» (Federici, 2020: 37).

²⁵ The myth of meritocracy and social escalation is currently in crisis, and has been contested and debunked in recent analysis concerning especially higher education – in this landscape, I find a specially coherent and thorough articulation in Michael Sandel’s *The Tyranny of Merit*. In this essay, Sandel challenges the individualistic approach of meritocracy and accuses it of having a central role in the demolition of the common good, especially in the dismantling of social, education and health services in the United States. According to the author, meritocracy is built on a salvation narrative that fetishizes individual responsibility and «gives people confidence that, with sufficient effort and faith, they can achieve health and wealth» (Sandels, 2020: 48). If health is a matter of good will, he continues, then it is justified that the state privatizes health care and does not grant free access to public health systems to all citizens equally – since, as John Mackey, founder of Whole Foods states, «We are all responsible for our own lives and our own health» since healthy lifestyle choices guarantee health (Mackey, 2009). Therefore, «those who fall prey to ill health... have no one to blame but themselves» (Sandels, 2020: 49).

²⁶ Grind culture is defined as «the belief that people must work hard and be productive to prove their worth ... Grind culture may manifest itself in different ways depending on the job. Some examples include promotions based on how much time you spend in the office [and] your availability during off hours (evenings and weekends)» (Slang, 2023).

making space for rest, idleness and slowness become subversive. This is the core argument of The Slow Professor movement. Initiated by feminist scholars Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber, who published the movement's manifesto in 2016, the Slow Professor puts forward an alternative organization of temporality that reject the mandatory over-productivity of "publish or perish" academia, and reclaims space for *timelessness*, which they borrow from Mainemelis definition of inspirational temporal frameworks. In this approach, timelessness is defined as «the experience of transcending time and one's self by becoming immersed in a captivating present-moment activity or event» (Mainemelis, 2001: 548) which enables creativity and critical thinking freed from pressing impossible standards of productivity which are unsustainable in the long term, and which have severe effects both on physical and mental health (Berg & Seeber, 2016: 103).

Berg and Seeber depart from the principles of Parkins and Craig's Slow movement and Slow living to craft a time that «has the potential to disrupt the corporate ethos of speed» (Berg & Seeber, 2016: 11). However, slowing down how we inhabit time does not only touch upon speed: it is an all-embracing transformative practice that, by means of consciously disturbing normative time expectations, is able to reorganize our relationship to human and non-human others, in such a way that makes room for attentiveness, dialogue, and caring habits. As Parkins and Craig argue, Slow living enables an experience where «everyday life – in all its pace and complexity, *frisson* and routine – is approached with care and attention ... in the present in a meaningful, sustainable, thoughtful *and pleasurable way*» (Parkins and Craig, 2006: ix).

In 2022, The Nap Ministry founder Tricia Hersey published *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto*, which starts with the statement: «Your body is a site of liberation. It doesn't belong to capitalism» (Hersey, 2022: 6).²⁷ Resting as a form of resistance is conceptualized in this movement from a trauma-informed lens that analyses how the nuanced relationships connecting poverty, imperialism and capitalism have crafted a temporal regime that drains bodyminds, with a special focus on how Black women's

²⁷ In relation to the Slow Professor movement, it is thought-provoking to point out that Hersey's development of rest as resistance came from her experience in the academic environment, «while in a brutally busy graduate program» (Hersey, 2022: 8).

bodyminds are an acute target for this exhausting dynamics. In front of this temporality, Hersey calls for subverting productive times and making room for rest as a «refusal to donate my body to a system that still owes a debt to my Ancestors for the theft of their labor» (Hersey, 2022: 8). Hersey traces back grind culture and over productivity to the roots of imperialist and colonialist pursuits, and hence connects rest as resistance to a history of intersecting systems of oppression which justify the exhaustion of bodyminds in virtue of their class, race and gender. When embraced within such history, rest practices can be understood in relation to and identified in different liberation movement across history – for instance, rest becomes crucial in Black feminist protests, which require additional labor dedicated to activism for bodyminds who are already drained by waged and reproductive labor (Fig. 17).



Fig. 17 A group of Black women and children taking a collective nap in church nursery during Freedom Summer Voters Right Movement in 1961. Photo credit: Paul Schutzer

Rest constitutes then a defiance to destructive productivity standards that favor competitive systems that praise individual success and merit in front of fostering communities of care that enable different rhythms and that prioritize making life livable. Practicing rest, then, becomes a commitment to the value of embodied experience in front of abstract standards of achievement:

I trust myself more than capitalism. Our refusal will make space for abundance. We will have to leap and trust rest. May the ground underneath hold us, and if we must collapse, may a soft pillow be there. This book is a scream on a bullhorn for the collective to join me in disrupting and pushing back. The Nap Ministry is a warm blanket swaddling us all back to our deepest selves. A more human place. A resting place. (Hersey, 2022: 8)

As far as Disability Justice's principle of Sustainability is concerned, timelessness and rest constitute then kindred tactics of resistance that afford reorganizations of time that confront the sense of urgency and the frame of normative time that oppresses disabled time experiences as deficient and meritocratic time that labels the latter as lazy. Most importantly, both the Nap Ministry and the Slow Professor movements provide tactics of resistance that can enable us to dreaming disabled futures through a *collective* standpoint. That is, they show any movement that aims to reorganize time in a way that disrupts productive time needs to offer a collective "warm blanket" (Hersey, 2022: 8), i.e. a caring support system, that is able to counteract the spiral of guilt due to internalized productivity standards and grind culture. Practices such as collective naps and making room for community and joy (Hersey, 2023; Berg & Seeber, 2016: 90) become then collective care actions that do not aim to be mere correctives or exceptions within normative time, but rather have the potential to defy and reorganize how we inhabit time in ways that can be extremely generative for Disability Justice activism. In what follows, I show how such kindred approaches are implicitly present in the reorganizational practices of Access Art, which are imbued with respect to different bodyminds' speeds, tolerance and even praise of slowness, and defense of pleasure, rest, and joy as undeniable for granting support for sustainable lives that do not compromise or make optional that disabled bodyminds not only survive but thrive.

6.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

Dismantling the exclusive criteria of productivity as a measure of the value of bodyminds, and the fetishization of longevity as a requirement to imagine possible futurities requires resistance tactics that put forward alternatives understandings of time experiences that allow sustaining disabled existences. In what follows I propose a framework to account for how this rearticulation of time at a micro-level take place through Disability Justice practices in Access Art, and I establish Pleasure Activism as a paradigmatic field where a rearticulation of time which defies linearity and productivity is performed. To begin with

the micro-level, I draw on Arseli Dokumaci's "micro-activist affordances" as a central tactic in the transformative manipulation of temporal patterns through variation in Access Art. Dokumaci foregrounds the generative potential that emerges when we cannot comply with the habits and patterns of behavior through which our environment operates (Dokumaci, 2019). For example, imagine a bodymind with limited grip which struggles to open a bottle of water via the conventional mode. Confronted with the bottle, Dokumaci argues that an alternative set of affordances, that is, possibilities of action emerge for the bodymind with limited grip. In this case, one of the affordances is the opening of the bottle using a towel between the hand and the lid. This inadequacy to normative habits can affect temporal expectations too: for instance, if we collectively agree to commit to the access needs of those who require visual descriptions, we may *need* to reject the strict schedule of twenty-minute conference papers; if we refuse to leave some bodyminds behind, it might take us an extra hour to cross a city and get to an appointment (Soldatic, 2011); if we want to enable tactile explorations of sculptures, a twenty-minute visit of a museum exhibition can become a two-hours tour.

Therefore, the environment does not appear affordance-less and impracticable for people with disabilities, since there is only a mismatch between the potentiality of the body and the *conventional* possibilities and time expectations for action. On the contrary, spacetime continues to be dense in affordances, in the sense that they create the potentiality of enacting alternative affordances that enable them to navigate the world just in another mode, among the variety of paths that could exist. Dokumaci denominates these variations from conventional patterns of action micro-activist affordances, defined as «micro, ongoing, and (often) ephemeral acts of world-building, with which they make the world offer affordances that are otherwise unimaginable» (Dokumaci, 2019: 493). Dokumaci draws on James Gibson's theory of affordances to explain the 'mutuality' between organism and environment, arguing that micro-activist affordance emerge in a process of co-creation between bodyminds with disabilities and an environment that is usually build by ableist design, and therefore *made for* temporarily abled bodies. From the Deweyan approach, we can understand now how the creation of micro-activist affordances constitutes a process of cultural creation.

Thinking of disability through the concept of micro-activist affordances as a process of cultural creation, creates the possibilities of thinking how conventional affordances are contingent and allow space for rupture and variation. Micro-activist affordances offer then an alternative to the paradigm of disability as a deficiency, because they express how constraints and mismatching between bodyminds with disabilities and the built environment constitute a creative ground that enables growth and thriving through the creation of a disability culture that can sustain the lives of bodyminds with disabilities. As Dokumaci argues,

in both everyday living with disability, and performance improvised within the disabling conditions of stage or site, the affordance being invented emerges not from the complementarity of the body and the given order of things, but from the lack of that complementarity instead. (Dokumaci, 2019: 512)

Crafting alternative temporalities appears thus as a practice of micro-activist affordances. Having made sense of such practice, I want to put forward how Pleasure Activism is a privileged ground for developing these resistance tactics contesting the time of productivity. This privilege can be accounted for in virtue of the phenomenologically non-linear and politically anti-productive (hence anti-capitalist) temporality of pleasure. In *Pleasure Activism: the Politics of Feeling Good* (2019), adrienne maree brown characterizes this kind of activism as a transformative justice practice that recognizes pleasure as a measure of freedom. Pleasure activism as a liberatory practice is also linked to the fifth principle of Disability Justice insofar it aims to «create more room for joy, wholeness, and aliveness (and less room for oppression, repression, self-denial and unnecessary suffering)» (maree brown, 2019) in our lives. Brown's volume is a compilation of essays and conversations structured in five sections: (1) Reflections around Audre Lorde's essay 'The Erotic as Power'; (2) 'The Politics of Radical Sex', which provides three tools for pleasure activism: self-love, orgasmic meditation, self-pornography, developing erotic awareness and talk about sex; (3) 'A Circle of Sex', which includes "pleasure assignments" or weekly "hot and heavy homework", a conversation with Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Holiday Simmons, Mai'a Williams and Samhita Mukhopadhyay about casual sex, and an interview with Sami Schalk on disability, race and gender in pleasure activism; (4) the fourth section is entitled 'The Politics of Radical Drug Use' and focuses on Harm Reduction policies; (5) and finally,

‘Pleasure as Political Practice’ gathers the practices of Junauda Petrus, micha cárdenas, Amita Swadhin, Alana Devich Cyril, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. Dallas Goldtooth, Sonya Renee Taylor, Maori Holmes, Taja Lindley, Michi Osato and Una Osato, Suguey Hernandez, Idelisse Malave and Alta Starr, Autumn Brown, Janine de Novais, and Zahra Ala. The book concludes with a chapter on ‘Principles in Practice’, which provides a list of eleven practices for pleasure activism.

I will focus on the eleven practices of pleasure activism and on Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's contribution about care as pleasure, to justify how pleasure activism practices configured in Access Art practices are a privileged ground for establishing alliances between Disability Justice and other social justice movements that strive for collective liberation from time foreclosure and time constraints, ingrained in an accumulative system that celebrates accelerated labor and disdains disabled bodyminds as unproductive and subsequently valueless. The eleven principles of pleasure activism (PPA) are:

- (PPA1) attention liberation through aware and agential attention,
- (PPA2) practicing pleasure in your own body and life in order to grow,
- (PPA3) finding the ease to sustain the struggle,
- (PPA4) center pleasure as an organizing principle in organizing joyful resistance,
- (PPA5) setting generative boundaries,
- (PPA6) only consenting and saying yes when we really mean it,
- (PPA7) taking responsibility for our pleasure within a collective human system,
- (PPA8) being committed to our processes of growth,
- (PPA9) being detached from any outcomes,
- (PPA10) being satisfiable, and
- (PPA11) acting like the miracle we are.²⁸

Pleasure Activism is thus informed as a temporal reorganization led by agential attention (PPA1), which I understand as the self-cultivation of our drive to calmly direct our attention to aspects of our environment, that become more or less salient depending on our standpoint. This attentiveness demands a duration that resists the fetishization of

²⁸ Modified from maree brown, 2019.

immediacy of ableist distributions of the sensible.²⁹ In Pleasure Activism, it is in centrally pleasant experience that we can cultivate an aware and agential attention. In line with Greene’s aesthetic education, this agential attention performs in itself an *attention liberation* insofar it constitutes a variation from the hegemonic forms of attention dictated by coarse-grained capitalistic made environments. In contrast, agential attention-directed encounters cultivates a detail-oriented attention that enables the appreciation of the minor aspects of situations in proximity or intimacy – as lively and meaningful –, aspects that the coarse-grained big picture leaves aside in favor of something grand (Greene, 1995b: 24). In Pleasure Activism, we find this idea present in the first principle, which establishes a kind of “attention sovereignty” as a crucial practice for Pleasure Activism and liberation.

Finally, Pleasure Activism is committed to a processual understanding of time (PPA2, PPA8) that values the process itself rather than the outcomes or products (PPA3, PPA9) – a frontal opposition to productivity-based value scales of time. This intrinsic value of the process relies on how we find pleasure *as* we enact them, and for this reason, Pleasure Activism actions do not structure time prospecting a future or final outcome that arrives *outside and after* the pleasure practice in itself. We find pleasure *in* caressing, *in* molding pottery, *in* transiting an artistic installation. This alternative spacetime that rejects time foreclosure in favor of a spacetime that makes room for pleasure practices is collectively-held responsibility – which involves organization (PPA4), boundaries (PPA5), consent (PPA6), and accountability (PP7). This dimension of Pleasure Activism emphasizes how intercorporeality and interdependence of bodyminds are essential when building a spacetime that we can inhabit together, a spacetime able to hold caring relationships, which will be further developed in the eighth principle of Disability Justice, *interdependence*. Hence this collectively held responsibility for pleasure can be read as a consequence of understanding pleasure as a caring practice that is materially relational:

²⁹ Here, I find it useful to resort to twentieth-century feminist Pragmatist Maxine Greene and her philosophy of education, which revolves around the concept of aesthetic education. aesthetic education as «an intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what is there to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such a way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful» (Greene, 2001: 6). In Greene, aesthetic education is examined as a meaningful task that involves willful agency and participation, directed towards an attention that can appreciate detail. This detail-oriented attention is trained preferably by the contemplation of the arts, but it aims to be an over-arching structure that can help us appreciate the nuances of our socio-political realities and therefore work together towards a more equitable future.

I am embedded in a network of care with my environment, human and non-human others. Pleasure here is not understood in an egotistic feeling that self-enclosed subjects experiment on their own individually, or in their “alone time”, but rather a kind of relationship and a process of intimate exchange with the environment in synchronicity.

This is the core idea in Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha’s contribution to *Pleasure Activism: ‘Care as Pleasure’*. By sharing personal experiences where she has felt an intersection of care and pleasure – a bed day with their partner, an accessible hike with friends – Lakshmi argues that these joyful intersections challenge common prejudices about how «‘care’ and ‘pleasure’ can’t even be in the same sentence» (maree brown, 2019). Vindicating care work as a pleasant practice, which does not go without contradictions and tensions, constitutes an act of resistance against the way ableist cultures «look down on disability or mental health as weakness and stigma, and we know that if we show ours, we can lose a lot—dates, credibility, social capital, jobs, kids» (maree brown, 2019) because it entails that caring for one another can be sexy and joyful, even desirable. This is liberatory insofar it questions masking, I.e., «curating myself so only my ‘normal’ parts showed—on dates, in the social world—and never showed anyone my damn care needs» (maree brown, 2019) and proposes to honor our needs not as a deficiency but as a dimension of our lives that is multi-faceted and can bring us moments of conflict and pain, but also of joy and pleasure, making lives with disabilities *joyful* lives.

7. Commitment to cross-disability solidarity

We value and honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, even and especially those who are most often left out of political conversations. We are building a movement that breaks down isolation between people with physical impairments, people who are sick or chronically ill, psych survivors and people with mental health disabilities, neurodiverse people, people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, Deaf people, Blind people, people with environmental injuries and chemical sensitivities, and all others who experience ableism and isolation that undermines our collective liberation. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 25)

7.1. Origins

Cross-disability solidary is the seventh principle of disability justice and it was proposed mainly as a measure of restitutive justice in front of the discrimination of people with

non-visible disabilities in the Disability Rights movement of the eighties. As Berne develops further in interview, the legal-centered framework of Disability Justice left aside many ‘cliff-hangers’ concerning disability due to «centralizing people with mobility impairment» (Berne and Wong, 2015). This centrality, which was instrumental for vindicating mainly architectural accessibility measures, came at the expense of other disabilities and also at the expense of how other identities – race/gender/class – shaped the experience of disability in unique ways. As Berne points out, this invisibilization came about

because the people that were leading were white and middle class, and that was their primary focus perhaps of marginalization, but when you’re a disabled woman of color, there are many, many ways that we get undermined both individually and collectively. (Berne and Wong, 2015)

Although acknowledging the role of Disability Rights advocacy as a trailblazer for Disability Justice, the latter came out of specific needs for recognition that arose due to the preeminence of «white cis-male wheelchair users» specially as *leaders* of the movement (Membris, 2020: 385).³⁰ Shayda Kafai describes the emergence of Sins Invalid as a central focus and developer of Disability Justice as responding to a «need for kinship», and a need to generate spaces of love that make room for this kinship, which Berne denominates «crip-centric liberated zones» (Kafai & Lakshmi Piepznasamarasinha, 2022). The limited scope of representations of disability in the leadership of Disability Rights activism had both symbolic and material consequences, which in conjunction foreclosed opportunities for building cross-disabled coalitions. Symbolically, the preponderance of people with mobility impairments in the front line of the movement led to a limited legibility of disability. The neglecting of non-visible disabilities in front of physical impairments is manifested in the institution of the disability icon: the International Symbol of Access. This symbol, established as an international standard, ISO 7001 image, is used to mark spaces which are accessible for people with diverse disabilities. It consists of a blue square and a stylized figure of a person in a wheelchair in static position, thus representing all the community through a very specific portion

³⁰ While in the Disability Rights movement the leaders were principally those with physical disabilities and wheelchair users, Disability Justice strives to include those with all kinds of disabilities: B/blind and visually impaired communities, D/deaf communities, Mad Pride activism, and Zebra Pride which refers to people with rare invisible disabilities like Ehlers-Danlos syndrome.

which are wheelchair users. Donna Reeve criticizes how «the ubiquitous wheelchair symbol ends up reinforcing the hegemony of particular kinds of impaired bodies which will be accommodated and recognized as ‘disabled’» (Reeve, 2020: 109). On the same line, in 2011 the World Report on Disability by the World Health Organization categorized as ‘classic’ impairments: wheelchair users, blind people, and deaf people. As Grue and Lundblad point out, «this is a very small subset of disabled people ... the disability field is in dire need of coalition building in order not to be fragmented into a million diagnostic pieces» (Grue and Lundblad, 2020: 119) which are obstacularized by exclusionary representation and categorizations of disabilities.³¹

This conditional legibility has been examined by Donna Reeve as ways of *dys-appearing*, which constitute cultural processes that have very real effects on disabled bodyminds both individually and collectively.³² We can understand how bodyminds *dys-appear* as «the process of creating culturally recognizable ‘disabled bodies’» which demands them «to foreground their impairment» (Reeve, 2020:109). This entails that some kinds of disability and impairments are excluded from being read as such culturally, and therefore erases the experience of whole segments of people with disabilities: that is, if an exclusionary prototype of the disabled subject is culturally constructed – and (re)produced by cultural devices such as the accessibility symbol – then «only certain

³¹ As Membris has argued, diagnosis-based approaches erase experiences of disability from multiply oppressed populations who resist identifying as disabled within medical industrial system institutions due to the stigma and systemic violence associated with such identities. If we want to contribute to the possibility of coalitions, he argues, we need to broaden the scope of disability, to consider «pain, suffering, madness ... diagnosis, treatment, recovery, cure and care, all of which are critical to understanding not only the lived realities of disabled people, but also their claims for rights, inclusion, access and power» (Membris, 2020: 385). If we pay attention to the headliners of that movement, and to their main claims to no barriers, equal employment and independent living, we can sketch a rough portrait of what a person with disabilities was supposed to be and look like. Disability Justice argues that Disability Rights framed disability in a limited way, overlooking the nuanced experiences of people with disabilities who are subject to multiple oppressions, either because of the overlay of different disabilities, or because of the interaction of multiple systems of oppression.

³² Take for instance the testimony of Neil Jacobson in the documentary *Crip Camp* (LeBrecht, 2020): Jacobson is a writer and disability educator that has cerebral palsy, and he explains that when he decided to marry Denise Jacobson, who also has cerebral palsy, his mom told him: «I understand why you want to marry a handicapped girl, but why can’t you find a polio?» (LeBrecht, 2020). This small interaction shows a hierarchical configuration, in this case imposed by the ableist view of disability, that structures the relationship between two different communities of people with disabilities: polio survivors, who are usually wheelchair-users; and people with cerebral palsy. The Disability Justice principle of cross-disability solidarity would advocate for *not reproducing* this hierarchical configuration within the interrelationships between different experiences of disability, embracing a genuine pluralistic communication among communities that establish cross-disability coalitions *in difference*.

bodies and minds are considered to be ‘disabled’ and eligible for benefits» (Reeve, 2020: 111). Reeve mentions the stigma attached to using accessible toilets and reserved park spaces for people with invisible disabilities that fail to comply with the stereotypical wheelchair user.

Collectively, the stereotyping of disability to an exclusionary representation hinders the potential for cross-disability coalitions because it reinforces separations among people with disabilities instead of focusing on interconnections. It is because of this segregation that Disability Justice puts forward a principle of cross-disability solidarity, which is rooted in the intersectional standpoint established at the beginning of the draft. A solidarity stemming from intersectionality means building associative coalitions *in difference*, recognizing the uniqueness of each positioning and lived experience, but using that difference to enrich the future we imagine in order to craft collective liberation that leaves no one behind. Cross-disability solidarity, then, would entail a transformation of ways of dys-appearing that broadens the scope of what disabled experiences can be read as legible and can have their access needs covered. Disability Justice recognizes the damaging effects of limiting stereotypes of disability for both multiply oppressed experiences of disability, and less visible and invisible disabilities within the movement. For this reason, the principle of cross-disability solidarity is a normative principle that requires ways of reorganizing where bodyminds are liberated from dominant forms of dys-appearing as a prerequisite to exist freely and to have their access needs recognized. Cross-disability constitutes then a central opposition to medical industrial complex processes that put bodyminds in traumatic positions of hesitancy and internal dilemmas, concerning the stigma attached to self-identifying as disabled, and the barriers to resources and facilities if a bodymind rejects such disclosure, diagnosis and self-identification.³³

³³ From a phenomenological perspective, Margaret Price’s *Mad at School* analyses how mental disability affects and hinders livable life in academic culture, and the difficulties of negotiating disclosure concerning «*psychiatric disability, mental illness, cognitive disability, intellectual disability, mental health service user (or consumer), neurodiversity, neuroatypical, psychiatric system survivor, crazy, and mad*» (Price, 2014:9). Price explains how as a reaction to the hypervisuality or *hypermarking* (Price, 2014: 152) of Mad behaviors in academia, one feels the need to constantly be masking, while within the industrial medical complex they need to get a diagnosis to access support and medicine. As an alternative, Price vindicates Mad Pride as a liberation from stigma through which «thoughtful attention to mental disability in academic culture—not as a deficit or problem to be solved, but as a potentially rich source of knowledge—can help ... consider

Such dilemmas lead disabled bodyminds to get entangled in dynamics of masking and passing. Passing is defined as replicating ‘non-disabled’ norms and behavior to appear as such – Leder defines this as a process where the bodymind «incorporates an alien gaze, away, apart, asunder, from one’s own, which provokes an explicit thematization of the body» (Leder 1990: 99).³⁴ This forced normalcy is restricted to people with nonvisible disabilities, and privileges them to partly choose in which contexts they disclose their disability, illness or impairment. However, «there is always the risk that their disability status will be revealed, thereby risking psycho-emotional disablism when their body dys-appears as they become subject to the prejudiced comments of strangers» (Reeve, 2020: 112) leading to «negative psycho-emotional aspects of concealment» (Thomas, 1999: 55). This passing therefore places people with nonvisible disabilities in an interstice or borderline experience where they constantly negotiate their identity as disabled (Lingsom, 2008), in a space that has been explored by Latinx Feminist Phenomenology as a space of construction of subjectivity *on the borderlands* (Anzaldúa, 1987). A particular kind of passing takes place in the dys-appearing ways of autistic bodyminds, who deploy strategies of masking.

In what follows, it will be argued that the heritage of Latinx Feminist Phenomenology and specially its proposal for building coalitions in difference within communities of multiply oppressed bodyminds provides a kindred approach to cross-disability advocacy in Disability Justice. As such, it will afford a theoretical framework from which we can make sense of the philosophical implications of how Disability Justice-centered spaces are organized according to a coalition in solidarity among cross-disabilities. This coalition, as it has been argued above, constitutes a particular political organization derivational from intersectionality which affects alliances *within* the movement – in contrast with the external dynamics shaped by cross-movements organizing, which affect a broader scope of associations, collectives, and bodyminds who may not identify as disabled.

changes such as ... more flexible classroom structures; vigorous questioning of the ways that mental dis/ability is policed; and, in general, broader possibilities for the pace, structure, and content of our academic “productivity.”» (Price, 2014: 234)

³⁴ Carmen Papalia uses the term “visual etiquette” to refer to the way we are taught to follow rules of behavior that mask B/blind and partially sighted bodyminds with rules like facing the other person when speaking and “looking to their eyes” (Abahmed, Etmanski, and Papalia, 2021).

7.2. Kindred approach: Tactical subjectivities for world travelling

In her work on Latina Feminist phenomenology *In Between*, Mariana Ortega develops an account of the multiplicity of selves that draws on María Lugones, Paula Moya and Chela Sandoval's theory of differential consciousness and identity shifting (Sandoval, 2000, 2002; Moya 2021; Lugones, 2003), which Sandoval calls "tactical subjectivity" to understand the ways in which woman of color navigate multiple social locations and how there is a positive value in such a multiplicity because it constitutes a source of creativity and resistance (Ortega, 2016: 184). Ortega adopts the concept of "world"-travelling introduced by Lugones as an experience of othering that affords «the possibility and complexity of a pluralistic feminism, a feminism that affirms the plurality in each of us and among us as richness and as central to feminist ontology and epistemology» (Lugones, 2003: 38). Lugones emphasizes how world-traveling points towards a dis-essentializing of social and cultural identities, which become contextual and extremely performative:

Those of us who are "world"-travelers have the distinct experience of being different in different "worlds" and of having the capacity to remember other "worlds" and ourselves in them. We can say "That is me there, and I am happy in that "world." So, the experience is of being a different person in different "worlds" and yet of having memory of oneself as different without quite having the sense of there being any underlying "I." When I can say "that is me there and I am so playful in that 'world,'" I am saying "That is me in that 'world'" not because I recognize myself in that person; rather, the first person statement is noninferential. I may well recognize that that person has abilities I do not have and yet the having or not having of the abilities is always an "I have . . ." and "I do not have . . ." (i.e., it is always experienced in the first person). The shift from being one person to being a different person is what I call traveling. This shift may not be willful or even conscious, and one may be completely unaware of being different in a different "world," and may not recognize that one is in a different "world." Even though the shift can be done willfully, it is not a matter of acting. One does not pose as someone else; one does not pretend to be, for example, someone of a different personality or character or someone who uses space or language differently from the other person. *Rather, one is someone who has that personality or character or uses space and language in that particular way. The "one" here does not refer to some underlying "I." One does not experience any underlying I.* (Lugones, 2003: 41, my emphasis)

The experience of multiple selves can then be understood as an embodied and embedded field of possibilities that is not flat: it is a value-laden environment where some positions – in Taylor words, *default* bodyminds (Taylor, 2019) - have the privilege of comfort while others are restricted to social locations with a greater degree of oppression and marginalization. Ortega points out how this experience of world-traveling is

connected to a misfit and interstitiality of the bodymind, who does neither fully belongs in one world, nor in the other:

All of us are multiplicitous selves, but there is a crucial difference between those who are comfortable and at ease in various worlds and those whose experience is marginalized, oppressed, or alienated in some way and who have to world-travel constantly. So, it is key to remember that multiplicity is more at issue for some selves than others, depending on the different ways in which their positionalities are perceived or negotiated given specific social, economic, and cultural context as well as power relations. (Ortega, 2016: 196)

That is, those social positions which are further away from the default identity most valued by dominant culture do not feel the discomfort that prompts marginalized bodyminds to world-travel. The reason for this discomfort is that bodyminds in non-default social positions are deemed as less worthy to be sustained, because they differ from what dominant culture considers a livable life or even ethically a “good life”. World-travel becomes then a survival strategy, which opens up the door to worlds that are otherwise uninhabitable. This discomfort is phenomenologically more salient for those who inhabit contradicting intersections, that is cultures or ways of navigating the world that are in conflict between each other. In the case of world-traveling when disability is involved, the privilege of being able to mask or pass as disabled comes with great distress and contradictions, which stem both from a collective gaze from disabled fellows who may interpret such shifting as problematic and from internal dilemmas stemming from internalized ableism.³⁵ When that happens, world-travel becomes constant since, as Ortega points out when commenting on Maria Lugones inhabiting of both the Latina and the lesbian worlds:

in each world she is lacking, and, as a border-dweller, she is not completely in either world ... she continues to have the perspective of the crossroads or the borderlands, a position that allows her a critical edge from which to interpret the multiple worlds she inhabits. (Ortega, 2016: 197)

The border-dweller in constant world-travelling inhabits then what we could denominate a position of liminality,³⁶ In the case of people with disabilities, specially

³⁵ Arseli Dokumaci has defined internalized ableism as «the habitus of ableism as an incorporated and hence forgotten history puts the affordances of the world within easy reach of some bodies while making them simply beyond reach, inaccessible or even unimaginable for others» (Dokumaci, 2018).

³⁶ In traditional anthropology, liminality constitutes the second stage of rites of passage: separation / liminality / reintegration. Van Gennep (1960 [1908]) defines rites of passage as transitions between two socially viable positions. Victor Turner adapts the former structure to define liminality as «a movement

those chronically ill, this liminality can become a permanent state; as Willett and Deegan argue, «this “permanent liminality” creates a social space that is no longer betwixt and between in a journey ending in a new social position» such that «unending liminality becomes a permanent outsider status, losing its power to connect the self and the other in everyday life» (Willett and Deegan, 2001; 143).³⁷ From the standpoint of Disability Justice, the perspective of the crossroads is hermeneutically powerful because it enables us to make palpable two aspect of the vindication for cross-disability solidarity: (1) that if we are to value difference within disabled experiences, reinforcing interconnection rather than separation, we need to acknowledge how disability is a continuum with degrees that does not respond to the binary categorization of healthy / pathological, but rather can be experienced in different degrees that are the condition of possibility for some strategies of masking and passing in particular contexts, (2) that ‘disabled’ is not a single defining identity, but rather an element of a complex, intersectional, multi-varied identity that interacts with many other dimensions such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and class to configure a specific experience of a whole human being, in other words, that people with disabilities should not be identified with their disability.

7.3. How it shapes Disability Justice Reorganizational Practices

Establishing bonds and networks of solidarity among communities with different disabilities strengthens the movement and promotes a wider scope of the conception of disability. From the standpoint of Disability Justice, the perspective of the crossroads is hermeneutically powerful because it enables us to make palpable two aspect of the

between fixed points and is essentially ambiguous, unsettled, and unsettling» (Turner, 1974:274), sometimes even paradoxical (Turner, 1967:97). According to Willett and Deegan, there is a similarity between the in-between status of liminality and outsiderhood and systemic inferiority: «Individuals of each state are at the margins of society, and occupy its lowest social positions ... Outsiderhood occurs when an individual is cut off from positions within the social system ... Outsiderhood can be involuntary, as in the case of a homeless, unemployed person, a social status that often is associated with physical disability. Such a status may establish a permanently liminal way of life in contemporary society» (Willett and Deegan, 2001: 140).

³⁷ This is the major contrast between both Feminist Latinx phenomenology and Critical Disability Studies; and the traditional conception of rites of passage of van Gennep and Turner. Whereas for the latter temporary liminality is a stage of disorganization and exception with a clear end (namely the reintegration of the individual with a new social status at the end of the rite), permanent liminality does not have a clear end and thus fails to be a mechanism that reinforces the established social order. As such, it becomes a source of dissent and a breach in social structures. For an in-depth analysis of disability as such permanent liminality, see Deegan (1975), Devlieger (1995), Murphy (1988, 1890), Nicolaisen (1995), Phillips (1990), and Shalinsky & Glascock (1988).

vindication for cross-disability solidarity: (1) that if we are to value difference within disabled experiences, reinforcing interconnection rather than separation, we need to acknowledge how disability is a continuum with degrees that does not respond to the binary categorization of healthy / pathological, but rather can be experienced in different degrees that are the condition of possibility for some strategies of masking and passing in particular contexts, (2) that ‘disabled’ is not a single defining identity, but rather an element of a complex, intersectional, multi-varied identity that interacts with many other dimensions such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and class to configure a specific experience of a whole bodymind. After recognizing this spectrum of experiences of disability, the principle of cross-disability solidarity establishes a precept to approach this spectrum in an honoring way, that is, in a caring way that considers everyone’s access needs valuable and worth-covering; as well as rendering everyone’s experiences as an epistemically valuable contribution to situated cripstemologies – analogously to how coalitional pluralist feminist in Latinx phenomenology celebrated «plurality in each of us and among us as richness and as central to feminist ontology and *epistemology*» (Lugones, 2003: 38, my emphasis). Therefore, the main input of this principle is a layer of effective political organization which simultaneously is shaped by and shapes the normative principle of adopting an intersectional standpoint.

From this, how can we build bridges across experiences of disability without reducing them to sameness and honoring their difference? Here, I find a joyful solution in Shayda Kafai’s notion of *crip kinship*, which she uses to describe the modes of solidarity that emerged in the practice of Sins Invalid and the birth of the Disability Justice movement (Kafai, 2021). The notion of kinship would follow the model of *curdling* as a mode of coalition posed by María Lugones. Lugones characterizes curdling as a mode of association that honors the impurity of social subjects, in front of assimilation models that aim at reducing bodyminds to abstract homogeneous purity:

Social subjects are rendered passive and reduced through exercises in purity. In a valorization of impurity, I call the resistant standing in the way of the production of social fragments “curdling” separation. Curdling separation is a form of solidarity that does not begin or end within the “safety” of communities of the same ... When seen from the logic of curdling, the alteration of the impure to unity is seen as fictitious and as an exercise in domination: the impure are rendered uncreative, ascetic, static, realizers of the contents of the modern subject’s imagination. Curdling, in contrast, realizes their against-the-grain creativity, articulates their within-structure-inarticulate powers. As we come to

understand curdling as resisting domination, we also need to recognize its potential to germinate separating from it, erecting sturdy barriers both around himself and between the fictional “parts” of impure beings. (Lugones, 2003: no page)

Disability Justice attends to impure lines by foregrounding the experience of those who historically have had to world-travel and pass as survival strategies due to rejection and stigma of their many and intersecting identities – when disclosure as disabled could be the source of greater oppression or even a matter of life or death. In contrast with historical resistance to allyship with disabled folks, Disability Justice highlights precisely the complexity of experiences of disability of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ people, homeless people, incarcerated people and/or people whose ancestral lands have been stolen. This complex network of systems of oppression is the basis on which the notion of intersectionality is built and from it, I have argued in the first principle, we can begin to understand how Disability Justice configures an approach that affords the creation contextual caring knowledge built upon crip ways of navigating the world from a multiplicity of bodyminds, each of them in constant negotiation with its environments in a process of co-creation. The shift in the ways in which we police disability is an issue that concerns society as a whole, because most of us will world-travel to an identity that has *some degree of disability and illness* in many moments of our lives, a vulnerability emphasized by Disability Justice’s notion of temporarily able-bodiedness and able-mindedness (Taylor, 2019).

It is worth noting that accepting such vulnerability remains problematic even within disabled bodyminds’ communities, due to the relative privilege and internalized ableism that generates tensions and conflicts between different experiences of disability – for instance, the already examined hypervisibility of white cishet wheelchair-users, or the ability to mask of some bodyminds in the spectrum. By foregrounding how experiences of disability include not only people with physical and mental impairments, but also people who are chronically ill or who have chronic pain, people with MCS (multiple chemical sensitivity), and politically self-identified Deaf people and Blind people, Disability Justice broadens the scope of disability and, consequently, the scope of practices on accessibility. I take its call to «honor the insights and participation of all of our community members» (Sins Invalid, 2019: 25) as a practice of coalitional political organizing within the community that leads us to an explicit recognition of how our

bodysminds are constituted in an ever-changing process of growth and interrelations with different systems of oppression and power, we can apply that same relational logic to the field of disability and move towards spectrum thinking models that break down the traditional barriers between able/disabled - for instance, honoring those who are 'sick' or temporarily disabled. In Disability Justice-informed Access Arts practices, such honoring shapes a tactic called *access check ins*, a term coined by Carmen Papalia that the artist describes as a practice

where space is held so everyone present has an opportunity to share any access needs that they would like others to know about. In my experience the access check is an opportunity for participants to self-identify, disclose, define their capacities, and draw attention to the conditions of the space, whether social, cultural, or political, that should be addressed before the group carries on with the purpose of their meeting. I think of the access check as a portal into Crip culture, a dimension where normalcy is understood as a continuum of embodiments, identities, realities, and learning styles, and accessibility is radically open and defined by those who need it. Sometimes something disclosed during an access check will shift the group dynamic and set an alternative course for how to proceed, and sometimes it will reveal the limitations of the space and what is needed in order for participants and their communities to return. (Papalia, 2023: 272)

We can emphasize two aspects of access check as a tactic of resistance built upon cross-disability solidarity. The first one is the commitment to disturb normative time, rejecting the mandates of project planning with the act of taking as much time as needed. As Papalia points out, «sometimes our check-ins take the majority of the three hours that we spend with each other, revealing paths to the places where we will direct our care and consideration» (Papalia, 2023: 269-270), thus this seemingly preparatory stage becomes central to the meeting to the detriment of goal-oriented task agendas. The second one is the flexibility of access checks to accommodate the multiplicity of disability experiences of those who are present and the respectful manner in which they are performed, which gives room to each participant to share as much as they are comfortable with instead of forcing disclosure: one can share how they are feeling, if they are going to keep their camera off, or if it is painful for them to sit throughout the meeting and they are going to need to stand up and move around the room. This multiplicity also affects each participant's experience, since it leaves the door open for modifications and expressing new access needs at any point of the time together so that we can all renegotiate how we care for and consider others.

8. Interdependence

Before the massive colonial project of Western European expansion, we understood the nature of interdependence within our communities. We see the liberation of all living systems and the land as integral to the liberation of our own communities, as we all share one planet. We work to meet each other's needs as we build toward liberation, without always reaching for state solutions which inevitably extend state control further into our lives. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 25)

8.1. Origins

The principle of Interdependence is a core statement of Disability Justice, and it upholds a conception of bodyminds in community and relationships of sustainment that challenges traditional dichotomies of the individual and the collective both in social ontology and political philosophy. Interdependence entails a shift in our logic and way of approaching our way of being in the world and establishing relationships with human and non-human others. Therefore, if the principle of wholeness dismantled the dualism of perfection/deficiency and normalcy/disability; the principle of interdependence questions that the dualism of public/private (Plumwood, 2003: 43), out of which we can derive the dualisms of collective/individual, political/intimate are the right building bricks for developing our conception of society and being with others. Alternatively, the principle of interdependence demands that we dream of futures where we do not ground our political systems and institutions on a myth of autonomous individuals who freely agree to cohabit and become a community – on the contrary, interdependence claims that we are, first and foremost, and always dependent on each other, and it is only in virtue of an act of abstraction that we construct, and subsequently naturalize, an idea of the autonomous and self-sustained disembodied subject. To perform this shift of paradigm means to rethink how we build our world, towards a care-centred society where dependency is not valued as inferior, marginal and exceptional, but rather as the rule of thumb.³⁸ I insist on placing a special weight on interdependence because I believe it to

³⁸ I want to thank Prof. Douglas Porpora from Drexel University for his insight on the doubleness of dependency, which in Marxian sociology is considered as a negative attribute in the sense that in certain hierarchical archaic power structures, like patriarchal societies, where women don't have access some resources and become dependent on the husband – so being *dependent* in that respect is something not beneficial. The discussions we could have at the Critical Social Ontology Workshop 2023 at St. Louis University made evident the need to clarify how interdependence breaks away from the duality of autonomous/dependent that structures such power relationships. That is, interdependence is neither dependency nor 'climbing up' toward autonomy, because it works according to a different logic where these oppositions cease to function.

embody the central shift that Disability Justice proposes from Western colonial politics of disability and epistemologies of bodyminds towards a *relational* conception of politics, knowledge, and the constitution of selves – hence interdependence makes evident that Disability Justice and its practices are not only a social movement, but also contain the basis for a deep philosophical project that would transform the logic of hegemony that has characterized Western thought for centuries. In her contribution to *Care Ethics in the Age of Precarity*, Eva Feder Kittay develops how setting interdependence as a given, as the premise for any political and social project, entails a transformative approach which

begins with the fact of inevitable dependency and depends on an acknowledgment of our inextricable interdependency. We begin with the relationship that we have all found ourselves in, being fully dependent on a caring person. And that caring person is herself dependent on other individuals and social, economic, and political systems that she requires to sustain herself, her dependent, and the relatedness that dependency care demands ... Any adequate political/social/economic system will need to acknowledge that at the heart of all social organization is the care and protection of dependent people. All else is built around this. (Kittay, 2021: 44)

The principle of Interdependence constitutes an invitation to think of bodyminds as intimately interconnected living beings in a world with others. This conception criss-crosses all dimensions of lived experience and affects both low-level stimuli and high-level complex cognitive processes. That is, interdependence aims to transform our understanding of bodyminds phenomenologically, ethically and epistemologically: how we sustain embodied and embedded live, how we establish relationships with others, and how we make sense of our surroundings in order to develop strategies to navigate the world. Informed by the conceptualization of political experience developed by Toni Morrison and Audre Lorde, recently Cynthia Willet has noted how an interdependence-centred standpoint recognizes that these strategies are highly conditioned not only by phenomenological circumstances – pain, joy, fatigue – but also by the social constructs that condition how we enter in relationships with others, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. Interdependence, she argues

conceptualizes what it is to be a person first and foremost from our immersions in relationships rather than as an individual apart from these relationships or as a position in a social structure. (...) The notion of autonomy even as revised by the relational autonomy theorists, is inherently too rationalistic and individualistic to explain impact of social forces, including race and color. (Willet, 2012: 167)

This conception promotes spectrum thinking and appreciation to the nuance connections between bodyminds and their environment, as opposed to a binary thinking that establishes a dichotomy between the independent self-made subject and the distanced object (human or non-human). In Disability Justice meeting spaces, this subject is usually identified as Modernity's subject of knowledge, a self-contained disembodied (or compulsory able-bodied) entity that emerges from the structures of heteropatriarchy, ablism, capitalism and colonialism/racism. Although the characterization of Modernity's subject is quite broad, from the standpoint of the history of philosophy, I think one can find paradigms of such a subject in Descartes' *res cogitans* and Cartesian perspectivalism – a term coined by Martin Jay in 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity' (Jay, 1988: 115) –, in Locke's citizen and epistemic subject based on productivity and property which is assumed to be an able-bodied white cis man, and in what Max Weber has called the "disenchantment of the world", that is, an impulse towards the over-rationalization of ourselves and our surroundings by scientific discourses, aimed to maximize productivity and assert full dominance over nature (Cascardi, 1995: 17). Disability Justice practitioners have also located such myth of the autonomous subject within a culture built on vision, which is understood as a sense of distancing and abstraction – here, it is fruitful to retrieve the anthology compiled by David Michael Levin *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision* (1993), since it examines how philosophy of perception throughout Modernity and the Enlightenment has constructed a subject that is vision centred. This has led to an Ocularcentrism that gives primacy to sight as a higher sense that is the main source of access to knowledge, consequently degrading the other senses. This 'sighted' conception of the subject is reinforced by discourses around light and vision as metaphors for knowledge and truth, which simultaneously mark blindness as ignorance and deficiency. Levin's compilation of critical approaches to scopic regimes of Modernity and the Enlightenment also considers the connections between the epistemic injustice that is foreshadowed in Ocularcentric epistemologies and the embedding of such epistemologies in patriarchal, racist, capitalist structures.³⁹ As Levin puts it:

the vision which dominates our ocular culture is haunted by the spectres of patriarchal rule: the rule of the masculine is both cause and effect of an Ocularcentrism which privileges the autonomy-drive of vision and rewards its aggressiveness, its hunger for

³⁹I have introduced Levin and Jay's historiographic proposal of Western thought as an Ocularcentric paradigm in the archaeology traced in the first chapter of this dissertation (56).

control. Similar arguments can be made concerning racism and capitalism. How do the specters of racism inhabit our way of seeing, and consequently continue to haunt us in the violence of our ocular paradigm? How has the hegemony of vision with a very specific character contributed to, and in turn been influenced by, the formation of capitalism, its processes, for example, of imaging? We need to see the connections these questions broach. (Levin, 1993: 205)

We can find the chronological continuation of these queries in the history of Western epistemology in the contemporary volume by Martin Jay, published in 1994, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, which Jay published after contributing a chapter on Levin's anthology. In *Downcast Eyes*, Jay argues that «a great deal of recent French thought in a wide variety of fields is in one way or another imbued with a profound suspicion of vision and its hegemonic role in the modern era» (Jay, 1994: 15). Jay analyses the hostility to vision in the work of a myriad of artists and critics, philosophers, social theorists, psychoanalysts and poststructuralist theorists to show a prevalence towards iconoclasm or iconophobia in 20th century French thought. However, this questioning of Ocularcentrism, I argue, is directed towards a completely different direction than Disability Justice's claim of interdependence as a call for abolishing the ableist primacy of vision as an abstract, distanced, disembodied sense. The standpoints examined by Jay – with the exception of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's approaches – still vindicate a subject of knowledge that is compulsory able-bodied, and even disembodied in some poststructuralist theories, and that is assumed to function within a normalcy that privileges their rationality in opposition to their perception and affects, take for instance Levinas' *face of the other* as an abstract idea of otherness that is not a face, or Lacan's separation of the Real (which includes flesh, abjection and death) from the Symbolic and the Imaginary. Therefore, Jay's research is to be considered but its focus does not overlap the scope of this research, which is aimed at proposals that challenge Modernity's subject towards proposals that emphasizes the embodiment of bodyminds and their interconnectedness with human and non-human others in order to tend to the building of caring habits and caring knowledge. As an alternative, I will draw on critiques of the Modern subject as developed in the American Pragmatist tradition of John Dewey and Jane Addams, and contemporary contributions by Maurice Hamington's embodied care and Plumwood's ecological self.

8.2. Kindred approach: Caring for others in Pragmatism and Ecofeminism

How does the Deweyan relational nature of the self as a cocreation of bodymind and its environment shape what Maurice Hamington calls Jane Addams' *embodied care*? In *Embodied Care: Jane Addams, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Feminist Ethics* (2004), Maurice Hamington approaches Jane Addams' work from a paradigm of care ethics which «(1) takes a contextual approach to morality, (2) assumes human connectedness, and (3) take maintenance of relationships to be a priority» (Hamington, 2004: 2). Embodied care, moreover, emphasizes the bodily dimension of these sustaining relationships that organize human connectedness by offering an operating definition of care as:

An approach to personal and social morality that shifts ethical considerations to context, relationships, and affective knowledge in a manner that can be fully understood only if care's embodied dimension is recognized. Care is committed to the flourishing and growth of individuals yet acknowledges our interconnectedness and interdependence. (Hamington, 2004: 3)

Three aspects stand out in this definition. First, the explicit mention to *interdependence*, as a defining dimension of how human bodyminds shape their being in the world with others. Second, the recovery of the Deweyan notion of *growth* as a central aspect of human morality, as the aim to which all sustaining and caring knowledge and habits are directed to. And thirdly, Hamington's attention to *embodiment* as a crucial aspect in the development of such growth. For us, embodied care's approach enables us to connect the Disability Principle of sustainability to that of interdependence, considering both of them as aspects of a broader project of transforming our ways of being in the world with others. From this perspective, Dewey's relational approach to the self as a living being that grows *in* an environment and Addams' caring knowledge and caring habits become fruitful hermeneutical tools to extend the principle of interdependence beyond its *claim* format towards philosophical argumentation. In Addams and her involvement in the Hull-House community, we find how a relational approach to morality is animated through intersubjectivity.

In *Democracy and Social Ethics*, we find Addams emphasis on the importance of quality relationships as a central moral element for orientating ourselves in the world and sustaining all lives as morally valuable. Addams proposes a more harmonious view of

growth than Dewey when arguing that caring knowledge and caring habits are directed towards finding balance in relationships (Hamington, 2004: 101), which she understands as a *healing balance* (Addams, 2002 [1902]: 37). However, her analysis of relationship dynamics after her experience at Hull House provides something Dewey only hints at, and «what care ethics has often been accused of lacking: a strong social-political element» (Hamington, 2004: 104). Moreover, this healing balance is not to be understood as a call for homogenization. On the contrary, Addams vindicates the moral value of diversity of ways of being in the world as a democratic virtue. The challenge is, precisely, to find a healing balance *in* interdependence with diverse social experiences, in a relationality that questions the autonomy of the modern capitalist subject and recognizes human connectedness to both other human bodyminds and all living systems:

By developing habits of care that include experiencing diverse social interactions, Addams implies that we can build a more caring society ... This demanding social habit of care will invoke both my corporeal engagement through all the habits of care that interaction requires and an engagement of my caring imagination to understand and empathize with the plight of others. Addams defies the traditional notions of rugged individualism and its dicta of autonomy, such as “do not harm” and “do not disturb the privacy of others,” as well as the self-centered material concerns of capitalism. (Hamington, 2004: 105)

In a nutshell, Addams’ complex understanding of caring habits and caring knowledge as social ethics contributes to our development of the principle of interdependence by emphasizing the social-political implications of a Deweyan conception of bodyminds as interconnected with their environment and with human and non-human others. Beyond growth as a living process, Addams adds the component of care as the moral tinting of such process, a tinting acquired after the effective involvement of Addams in community building activities at Hull House. For Disability Justice, the moral dimension of interdependence and the consideration of diversity in shaping such interdependence becomes crucial to vindicate disabled experiences as *valid* and as social-political transformative positions – this vindication is intimately connected to the principle of anti-capitalism, since it demands valuing bodies according to a logic that is not that of productivity.

Finally, we can find a radical proposal of interdependence that expands Addams and Hamington’s social ethics beyond care among humans in Ecofeminist thought,

especially in the notion of the ecological self championed by Val Plumwood in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (2003), first edited in 1993. I argue that Ecofeminism's proposal to dismantle the dualism human/nature is kindred to Disability Justice's deep project of reconceptualizing how we understand of being in the world as essentially and always immersed in interdependence with other beings – with bodyminds, but also non-human others such as animals and the environment. Plumwood presents Ecofeminism's project as a response against the «dominant, white, male Eurocentric ruling class» (Plumwood, 2003: 46), which has built a logic of dualisms that presents itself as naturalizes and justifies the many systems of oppression which locate specific beings and attributes in a position of inferiority in relation to the ruling class. Part of this dualistic logic is the construction of an autonomous subject. From the autonomous master's logic:

The denial of dependency on the social other presupposed in the market conception of rationality is present in the original liberal account of the individual and of society and the state. In the founding fiction of the contract, society is treated as an instrumental association driven by self-interest, whose purpose is each individual's security and the coordinating and making available of the infrastructure for the market, conceived as the means to the satisfaction of the myriad individual desires. The individual's 'contract' with these others testifies to their externality to his needs, to their mere usefulness, their inessentialness. For such a lone, self-sufficient wanderer in the woods, he who encounters the other only accidentally and occasionally, the well-being of others is merely a contingent, mutual arrangement of convenience, not an essential part of his well-being. The influential but impoverishing master fiction of the self as a self-contained rational maximiser denies the social and connected nature of the self, which could function in the way the fiction implies for only very limited areas of life. (Plumwood, 2003: 152)

Such denial of dependency serves as the “linking postulate” to establish an atomistic and abstract self that is disembodied and enters into instrumental relationships with others. From this vantage point of mastery, the self is separated through a logic of dualism that: denies (backgrounding), hyperseparates (radical exclusion), subsumes (incorporation or relational definition), objectifies (instrumentalism), and stereotypes (homogenization) the other in relation to the self (Plumwood, 2003: 48-53). In contrast with the autonomous self constructed from the logic of dualisms, Plumwood proposes a conception of the *ecological self*, which can account from the self which is immersed in a structure of interdependence. I present the ecological self as a functioning self in interdependent networks of care which has the advantage of maintaining its particular traits and wholeness, because unlike in approaches like the indistinguishability account

(Fox, 1984: 7), the ecological self does not confront the atomistic and egoistic view of the self with a self/other merger alternative (Plumwood, 2003: 179). The ecological self proposed in Plumwood's Ecofeminism consists of a distinct bodymind who nevertheless is capable of meeting the requirements for care of environmental ethics because they act from a standpoint that is not that of an abstract and universal ego, but rather from the standpoint of an embodied bodymind who is always embedded in relations of care with human and non-human others, and who recognizes the contextuality and instrumentality of dichotomies and separations, without taking such abstractions as natural divisions (human/nature, self/other, public/private) (Plumwood, 2003: 184). This *relational selfhood* constitutes «an identity expressed in caring practices which treat the other non-instrumentally» (Plumwood, 2003: 184). The ecological self can account for the way of being in the world vindicated in Disability Justice principle of interdependence insofar as it *expresses* itself in mutual relations of dependency and care with earth others, as Plumwood develops:

The ecological self can be interpreted as a form of mutual selfhood in which the self makes essential connection to earth others, and hence as a product of a certain sort of relational identity. In expressing that identity, the individual fulfils his or her own ends as well as those of the other (one meaning of 'self-realisation'). He or she stands in particular relations, which may be those of care, custodianship, friendship, or various diverse virtue concepts, to that other, who is treated as deserving of concern for its own sake, and hence as intrinsically worthy or valuable. The relational self and intrinsic value are, therefore, essential theoretical complements of a virtue account of ecological selfhood. I have tried to show how they can be accounted for in ways that enable them to apply to the natural world without problematic assumptions about difference or egoism. On their own, however, they do not delineate the precise content of that relationship, except as one of essential and non-instrumental concern, one of regard for beings for their own sake. (Plumwood, 2003: 185)

Therefore, in Disability Justice practices not only space-time distribution, but also the way we enter into relationships with human and non-human others will be reorganized from the standpoint of an ecological self who recognizes that «the heart of all social organization is the care and protection of dependent people. All else is built around this» (Kittay, 2021: 44). Hence this principle will be a major force when shaping practices that build communities from a radically alternative logic that does not only transform, or rather dismantle, systems of governance that oppress disabled bodyminds – it also entails a radical reconceptualization of what we understand as being human, a challenging of our

selfhood, and an acknowledgment of a shared and mutual dependency, of vulnerability and of the *temporary* character of able-bodiedness or able-mindedness.

8.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

Building Disability Justice-informed spaces for Access Arts relies on a series of tactics, such as access check-ins and time flexibility, which are all sustained by a basic premise of recognizing *interdependence* as a primary structure of existence. This means that we are in the world first and foremost embedded in networks of care and sustainability that enable us to move on with our daily activities and, up to a primary survival mode, to exist and thrive both as living organisms and as bodyminds who take part in social structures and in communities. When distributing our shared space and time, our occupations, and our sensibilities, Disability Justice practices foregrounds this interdependency through overarching strategies that build communities – however, as Mia Mingus has pointed out, ‘community’ can become an buzzword that fails to provide effective interactions for sustaining practices in transformative justice, not only concerning Disability Justice but also other intersecting movements such as trans liberation or environmental justice. As Mingus puts it, ‘community’ effectively fails to function as a reorganizational element when building spaces because of its manifold meanings:

For some, “community” was an overarching term that encompassed huge numbers of people based on identity (e.g. “the feminist community”); while for others “community,” referred to a specific set of arbitrary values, practices and/or relationships (e.g. “I don’t know them well, but we’re in community with each other”); or some defined “community” simply by geographic location, regardless of relationship or identity (e.g. “the Bay Area community”). We found that people romanticized community; or though they felt connected to a community at large, they only had significant and trustworthy relationships with very few actual people who may or may not be part of that community. For example, someone might feel connected to “the queer community,” but when asked who from that “queer community” they felt they could trust to show up for them in times of crisis, vulnerability or violence, they could only name 2 or 3 people. (Mingus, 2016)

To compensate for this equivocal, Disability Justice has adopted the functioning of *Pods* as a shaping principle for interdependent networks of care that can effectively reorganize our ways of being and of doing when we want to start a DJ-informed project or collective.⁴⁰ Pods define a movable and dynamic network of interdependent

⁴⁰ Pod was coined by Mia Mingus within the context of the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective in 2016, and has led her to found the project SOIL as an incubator that provides skills building, resources and

relationships that enable us to build capacity for transformative justice in a way that avoids a false or abstract sense of community in favor of intimate and personal bonds. Our pods can be multiple, and change depending on the time, circumstance, and nature of our access needs in each specific occasion. Mingus defines a pod as constituted by «the people that you would call on if violence or abuse happened to you» (Mingus, 2016) – but also «if you wanted support in taking accountability for violence, harm or abuse you’ve done» (Mingus, 2016). By recognizing how we are both capable of experiencing and *inflicting* violence upon others, pods avoids dualisms that reify those who belong to an oppressed community and *others* who do not and therefore are identified as unredeemable perpetrators of violence upon the oppressed community. As such flexible networks, pods recognize the complexities of interdependency and care, and the nuanced multiple affordances we are continuously presented with – be it being exposed to particular harm by others, or facing the tensions, frustrations and obstacles that inevitably appear in caring relationships.

In practice, pods become functioning tools that reflect the solid intimate relationships we rely on, thus preventing feelings of isolation that may arise when we fail to recognize or connect to an abstract large community. As such, they are tactically able to address concrete access needs more efficiently, as Mingus notes:

Once we had the shared language and concept of “pod,” it allowed transformative justice to be more accessible. Gone were the fantasies of a giant, magical “community response,” filled with people we only had surface relationships with; and instead we challenged ourselves and others to build solid pods of people through relationship and trust. . In doing so, we are pushed to get specific about what those relationships look like and how they are built. It places relationship-building at the very center of transformative justice and community accountability work. (Mingus, 2016)

Therefore, *pods* locate interdependence understood as effective interaction that build relationships for sustainable live at the frontline of Disability Justice practices and, for our concerns, at the center of recognizing interdependence in Access Art projects. This means acknowledging how building access is not a matter of complying with a set list of standard criteria, but rather of building intimate relationships among a group of people, that can be formalized as a *pod* in such a way that artistic practices can be sustained and

training for transformative justice since 2020. Among others, SOIL provides trainings on Accountability, Transformative Justice, Communication, and Pod Mapping (Mingus, 2020).

thrive, because access needs can be concretely expressed and addressed. To conclude the introduction of pods as a reorganizational tactic that centers interdependence in Access Art, I want to introduce the Pod Mapping Worksheet (Fig. 18), which is a resource to identify our own pods. The circle in the middle is you, and the closest little ones are the few people you can rely on and who are willing to cover your access needs when asked. The discontinuous dots are ‘potentially’ reliable people within your support system – they may respond, but your reciprocal intimacy is still conditional and mutable. Finally, the bigger dots at the edges are less intimate but sometimes more resourceful (in terms of funds and systematic services) agents, and they may be institutions, networks, coalitions, or other collective entities.

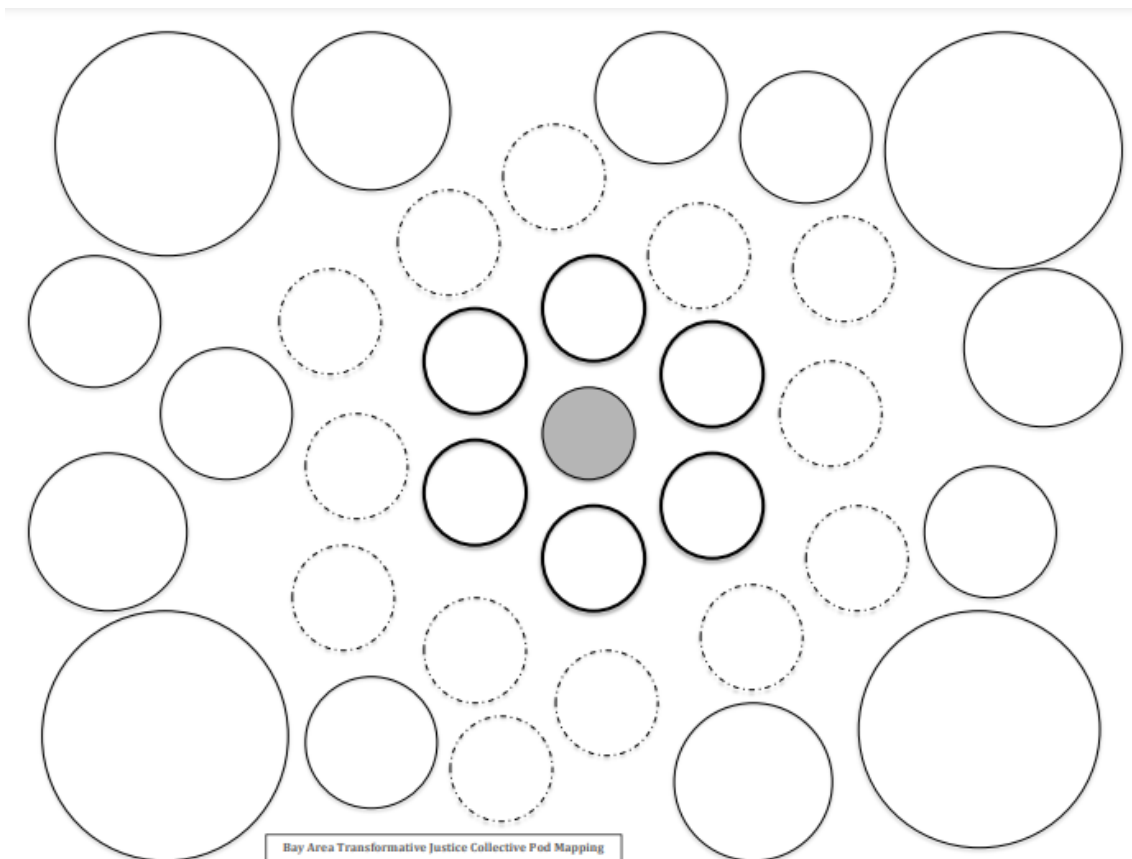


Fig. 18 Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective Pod Mapping. Credit: Mia Mingus, 2016.

In the case of Access Arts, Pod Mapping becomes a radical exercise of building a network of people that can be a dealbreaker that decides whether a project is imaginable or not from the *design stage* of the process. For instance, is isolation going to preclude

the performance of this Access Art project? Do I have the conditions of possibility to support myself and others involved in the project? Are there enough networks and groups I can resort to at the edges of my Pod Map? If the Pod Map is not defined enough, one may need to pause and grow it before embarking on an artistic project. Recognizing the need for pods and support to cover our access needs is a transformative justice within Access Arts insofar it counters narratives of individualism, autonomy, and entrepreneurship in favor of a preeminence of mutual aid and peer support that reflects how interdependence is taken as the primary way of being in the world that conditions *each and every one* of our activities. Furthermore, what Pod Mapping emphasizes is the joy and companionship that building intimate connections of care and interdependence can bring us, setting the conditions of possibility for setting up transformative justice projects, Access Art practices, and more generally community-building activities of resistance that radically fight systematic isolation in favor of joy and companionship. In this sense, interdependent tactics as approached by Disability Justice and Access Art share a commitment to *joy in resistance* already foregrounded by Maurice Hamington as the greatest legacy of care theorists:

Ultimately there is a joy to care and its embodied dimension. Embodied care represents a positive human ontology—that we are all capable of caring for one another, of being moral in our daily interactions. As with other behaviors, however, to become proficient at caring we must develop and exercise our habits of care. This is perhaps the greatest gift of Gilligan, Noddings, and the feminist philosophers who have developed care ethics: a positive, even joyful morality. There is an underlying belief in the human spirit, our connectedness, and our ability to understand and help one another. (Hamington, 2004: 147)

9. Collective access

As Black and brown and queer crips, we bring flexibility and creative nuance to our engagement with each other. We create and explore ways of doing things that go beyond able-bodied and neurotypical norms. Access needs aren't shameful — we all function differently depending on context and environment. Access needs can be articulated and met privately, through a collective, or in community, depending upon an individual's needs, desires, and the capacity of the group. We can share responsibility for our access needs, we can ask that our needs be met without compromising our integrity, we can balance autonomy while being in community, we can be unafraid of our vulnerabilities, knowing our strengths are respected. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 26)

9.1. Origins

The principle of Collective Access is an action-directed proposition, calling for shared responsibility in making spaces accessible and welcome for all of those present, as well as recognizing the barriers that prevents some for being present in such Disability Justice-informed spaces at all. As such, this principle has been developed mainly by practitioners and activists, among which notable contributors are Amanda Cachia and Carmen Papalia.⁴¹ A commitment to Collective Access entails the compromise to reorganize space and time in a distribution where it is possible to gather a community where there is room for

people with physical impairments, people who are sick or chronically ill, psych survivors and people with mental health disabilities, neurodiverse people, people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, Deaf people, Blind people, people with environmental injuries and chemical sensitivities, and all others who experience ableism and isolation. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 25)

To make sense of collective access and understand how it is a core shaping principle of Access Art practices, I will provide a functional definition of access which takes this notion beyond compliance with a set of standards and enables us to connect it with collective liberation, departing from Mia Mingus, Alice Wong and The Curiosity Paradox's characterizations of access as love, as a value, and as art, respectively. Subsequently, I will introduce how such notions take form in Carmen Papalia's Open Access tenets and I will offer a Pragmatist reading of such tenets. Finally, Papalia's practice will be used as an illustration of how the tenets for collective access find a privileged ground in social practice Access Art.

In 2018, artist, author and activist Mia Mingus pronounced the opening keynote address to the Disability Intersectionality Summit, entitles 'Disability Justice is Simply Another Word for Love'. In this speech, Mingus argued that access was love from a notion of access she denominates "liberatory access". She contrasted liberatory access with

⁴¹ Both Papalia and Cachia have been working for over a decade (2012-2023) on disability, arts and access. In 2023, Cachia has presented the most ambitious volume yet on creative access from the standpoint of Disability Justice: *Curating Access* (Cachia, 2023). The collection features contributions from curatorship and artistic praxis, including Papalia's most recent formulation of Open Access as a «temporary collectively held space» (Papalia, 2023: 267).

access as a compliance with a set of standards and legal measures - «having a ramp or being scent free or providing captions» (Mingus, 2018). As she puts it

Access for the sake of access or inclusion is not necessarily liberatory, but access done in the service of love, justice, connection and community *is* liberatory and has the power to transform. I want us to think beyond just knowing the “right things to say” and be able to truly engage. I want us to not only make sure things are accessible, but also work to transform the conditions that created that inaccessibility in the first place. To not only meet the immediate needs of access—whether that is access to spaces, or access to education and resources, or access to dignity and agency—but also work to make sure that the inaccessibility doesn’t happen again. (Mingus, 2018)

Therefore, Mingus characterized liberatory access as a *long-term* process of negotiation that can transform the world we inhabit and our ways to interact with it - i.e. it transforms the conditions that created inaccessibility by actively reshaping our built environment and our relationships with human and non-human others. This transformation is highly charged affectively, with love being a central component of Mingus’ notion of access, which connects collective liberatory access with collective liberation explicitly in the address:

Because I would argue that “disability justice” is simply another term for love. And so is “solidarity,” “access,” and “access intimacy.” I would argue that our work for liberation is simply a practice of love—one of the deepest and most profound there is. And the creation of this space is an act of love. And if we can’t love each other and ourselves, then what good is any of our work to get free? If we can’t reach out to break isolation and the walls we’ve put up between each other, as disabled people, then we will have already lost before we’ve won any political battle. (Mingus, 2018)

Liberatory access, then, is another term for love. And access is love that is practiced in a long-term process of creating space for such loving and longing among the community we are yet-to-build together. After her address, Mia Mingus proceeded to create #AccessIsLove, with fellow artists and activists Sandy Ho and Alice Wong. #AccessIsLove aimed to continue the conversation on access, solidarity and Disability Justice using the hashtag in different social networks to spread practices of love and community-building. Access Is Love was launched in 2019 and is currently hosted in two platforms: the Disability Intersectionality Summit website, and Alice Wong’s project *Disability Visibility*. Wong has been a major advocate of the project: in the eighty-second episode of her podcast *Disability Visibility*, ‘Americans with Disabilities Act’, Alice Wong insisted on the need for a long-term practice of access, arguing that «access is a

value and a practice we should all practice» (Wong, 2020). The project also published a list of ten places to start to shift the model of access towards a broad scope of procedural practices. These are:

1. Prioritize information about accessibility for all your events and workplace.
2. If you come across an event that does not have accessibility information mentioned, contact the organizers to include it.
3. Value disabled expertise.
4. Include image descriptions and Alt text on your social media posts.
5. Make sure video and audio content you create or use has captions and/or transcripts available.
6. #CapitalizingEachWordInYourHashtagHelpsScreenReaders
7. Access Check-ins: Along with names and pronouns, you can include an access check-in when you're doing introductions.
8. Use Content Notices for posts that contain content that may be emotionally taxing, harmful, triggering or traumatizing.
9. Encourage your people!
10. Expanding What "Access" Means: think about how we can create spaces--and a world--where all kinds of accessibility are centered and valued. (Mingus, Ho and Wong: 2019)

This list of places to start constitutes an invitation to move beyond a set of standard accessibility measures or policies that institutions comply with as a checklist. As we shall see, #AccessIsLove is intimately connected to The Curiosity Paradox's claim that access is art in their distinction between *Standard Access* and *Access Art*. In 'Standard Access Against Access Art', The Curiosity Paradox defends that Standard Access is a set of practices that comes from an eugenic legacy that makes Disabled people "better" - more valid – workers and consumers. Standard Access is a set of inclusion measures for the sake of inclusion, «led by code enforcers, non-Disabled experts, underpaid staff, workers without training. It is made by those who are not impacted and lack lived experience» (Miller & Lee, 2022). Therefore, Standard Access goes against the principle of the leadership of the most impacted and fails to practice a politics of "Nothing About Us Without Us", because it is formulated by people in power positions who retain the control over all decision making in order to incorporate accessibility *only as an afterthought*. Standard Access is not a practice that grows out of love, but rather of fear: it is «implemented to avoid lawsuits and financial ruin» (Miller & Lee, 2022). As a consequence of being a fear-driven practice aimed at complying with formal requirements, Standard Access ends up benefiting the needs of non-Disabled people and failing to attend the access needs of Disabled and marginalized people, who are only

invited to access public spaces only as regulated by rules imposed by the agenda of those in charge (non-Disabled and non-marginalized).

Contrastingly, Access Art is a practice born out of the resistance against Standard Access, and it is «led by activists, artists, poets, dancers, dreamers, institutional change-makers, consultants, and engineers who are marginalized. It is made by and with the leadership of those who directly benefit from the access that is created» (The Curiosity Paradox, 2021). Access Art centers the leadership of those who experience oppression as Disabled and marginalized people, who are recognized as «experts in lived experience and leaders» (The Curiosity Paradox, 2021). Access Arts seeks to honor the access needs of those who are present, rather than obeying a set of formal requirements. It broadens the scope of needs we can be responsive towards, incorporating non-formal features like flexible schedules for activities, land acknowledgements, being at peace with moments of silence, providing childcare, or being mindful of security and police presence.

Taking into account the experiences in Disability Justice spaces, I want to emphasize that other «imaginative and unique forms» (The Curiosity Paradox, 2021) will only become imaginable when we engage in responsible attentiveness to the comfort and gentleness of everyone present. This mutable character makes it essential to be open to dialogue, change and adaptation to upcoming access needs at all times in Access Art practices. As noted in ‘Standard Access Against Access Art’, the latter «is committed to adaptive, relational, interdependent change over time and learning together from failure» (Miller & Lee, 2022). For this reason, it experiments with hybrid modes of governance that mix dialogue, consensus, vote, randomness, and delegation of authority, instead of resorting back to hierarchical structures of power. Through these hybrid modes, Access Art generates many kinds of spaces for growth: not only in public spaces, which are privileged in Standard Access because they provide the much wanted public recognition and self-congratulatory benefits, but also private and in-between spaces, which can become central in practices of healing, repair and conciliation. For instance, in conversation with Fayen d’Evie, the need for intimate spaces outside opening hours became palpable in her practice during the activities organized around the responsive sculptural installation *From One Body to Another* (Casula Powerhouse, Sydney, 2017). Tactile engagement between the installation, Blind people and people with visual

impairments during opening hours exposed participants to a hypervisibility that became violent and tokenizing, making salient the need for intimacy and having a space of our own apart from the standpoint of ableist logic of mastery.

9.2. Kindred approach: Politicizing ‘access’ as a term

The focus on its applicability should not cover up the drastic shift of standpoint that Collective Access brings about regarding standard approaches to accessibility. Collective Access departs from a premise of radical equality that every bodymind is capable of fully participating in collective gathering spaces if their access needs were met. That is a given, from which the real effort stems: access needs are context-dependent, mutable, and sometimes incompatible. The commitment to Collective Access is that of considering the access needs of those present from the outset, and collectively agreeing to *try* to meet them when building gathering spaces – this does not mean that those needs *can* always be met, or that the process does not come with struggles, conflicts, frustrations, tensions, and exhaustion. To commit to Collective Access, then, one must take the standpoint of the most vulnerable bodyminds present. This approach stands in sharp contrast to standard access which is built around compulsory able-bodiedness in the sense that it consists of *a posteriori* measures that act as correctives to ‘accommodate’ or ‘adapt’ space to the so-called special needs of those who were left out from the outset design of the space.

9.3. How it functions when designing reorganizational practices

How can we build access in such a way that it is not a standardized set of measures but rather an ongoing process of generation of embodied caring knowledge and, therefore, a contribution to situated cripstemologies? Having introduced the models of access-as-art and access-as-love, I will analyze the most mature formulation of thinking access otherwise in Disability Justice literature, which is to be found in Carmen Papalia’s five tenets of Open Access, which are shaping guidelines to craft reorganizational practices in Access Art. The five tenets establish the grounds of Papalia’s social practice and aim to attend to access needs via a process of community support, mutual exchange and constant negotiation. Carmen Papalia generates experiences that revolve around this process because they put the participants in a position of nonvisual learners, which affords the constitution of a creative culture that reflects on the question: “What would a culture not

shaped on ableist assumptions of visual learning be like?” Therefore, Papalia’s work disrupts disabling conditions by honoring diverse embodiments and learning modes. The lived experiences provided by Papalia make interdependence salient and invite us to reconsider our coexistence with others and our attentiveness to their uniqueness and particularity. The first tenet sets the priority of access needs and emphasizes its intersubjective character as follows:

Open Access relies on those present, what their needs are and how they can find support with each other and in their communities. It is a perpetual negotiation of trust between those who practice support as a mutual exchange. (Papalia, 2018)

This tenet thus foregrounds *attentiveness* and *responsiveness* to the needs of those who are present, two factors that are core elements of care for Tronto (1994: 126-136). For Papalia, attending to the needs of others is a “perpetual negotiation” which in Access Art is ensured by the practice of Access Check Ins. An Access Check In is a ritual that usually opens the Access Art or Disability Justice event, but which remains open throughout its whole temporality and can be modified at any given time. In it, each participant is invited to share what they need to participate, how they are feeling and how that might affect their way of participating, and whatever other element they think is important to make present in order to feel welcome in their wholeness. Access Check Ins make palpable needs that are usually invisibilized by ableist assumptions and interrupt the objective-focused dynamics of meetings and events, allowing participants to interrupt the plan and set the rhythm.

It is worth noting that even before the 2020 pandemic, many events of Disability Justice arts and culture took place virtually or in hybrid formats, in order to allow the participation of those who are restricted in their transports and those who find comfort in domestic spaces like the bed. During the pandemic, Access Check Ins were perfected as online practices and incorporated new elements like indicating any connectivity problems or connection choices. Moreover, beginning online events with Access Check Ins made explicit and present an embodiment and a need for caring gentle spaces that can usually fade away in virtual platforms. In an Access Check In, we get to know the access needs of the participant, which performs an exercise of trust and mutual exchange by sharing their feelings and the different aspects of their wholeness which will affect the dynamics

of the event. It shares information which would be irrelevant in an industrial medical knowledge – like going for a walk – but which is part of the lived reality of the bodymind, and it leaves the door open to ongoing changing conditions by giving a heads up about how their mode of participation might change throughout the event. We will see how this collective responsiveness takes different shapes in Papalia’s work through the rest of Open Access tenets. The second tenet defines Open Access by way of contrast to standard access, and centers the epistemological value of access practice as a mode of cultivating embodied caring habits and caring knowledge:

Open Access is radically different than a set of policies that is enforced in order to facilitate a common experience for a group with definitive needs. It acknowledges that everyone carries a body of local knowledge and is an expert in their own right. (Papalia, 2018)

Again, the second tenet makes explicit the processual character of Open Access by challenging sets of policies with “definitive needs”. It does not follow the standards set by policymakers, but rather attends to those who are present as subjects of knowledge and experts in their own lived experience. Both Georgina Kleege and Carmen Papalia have repeatedly made public statements about how many people with disabilities *did not want* the accessibility measures they were offered, and felt discouraged to participate in many artistic events and experiences allegedly designed for them by institutions like museums and galleries. For instance, both claim that 3D tactile maps of paintings can be a good didactic element, but that they should not be conceived as a replacement of aesthetic visual experiences. As an alternative, Access Art creates practices where access is pleasurable and creative in its own right, something people with disabilities might actually *want to* experience. Notably, Papalia highlights his encounter with Collin van Uchelen in a fireworks display: van Uchelen was offering beholders a visual description of the display, but the most extraordinary thing is that he accompanied such description with a tactile experience of the fireworks, tracing with his fingertips the different shapes and movements in the night sky. Such encounter led Carmen Papalia and Collin van Uchelen to collaborate in *Project Fire Flower*, an invitation to experience fireworks through touch which was curated by Whitney Mashburn and exhibited at Vancouver’s Grunt Gallery from October 2nd to December 12th, 2021. The third tenet of Open Access develops further how everybody is a bodymind of local knowledge and an expert,

focusing on how such locality is constituted as a “point of orientation” grounded in an intersectional understanding of Tobin Siebers’ complex embodiment (Siebers, 2008):

Open Access is the root system of embodied learning. It cultivates trust among those involved and enables each member to self-identify and occupy a point of orientation that is based in complex embodiment. (Papalia, 2018)

According to this tenet, Open Access is a process that generates embodied knowledge. Since we have defined such process as relational, attentive and responsive at its core, I will argue that the kind of embodied knowledge build in access practices is a form of caring knowledge and a that the cultivation of trust in mutual support is a cultivation of caring habits, as defined in Hamington’s embodied care ethics (Hamington, 2004). Furthermore, the possibility to self-identify and orientate oneself in the world from the framework of complex embodiment endows such caring knowledge with a situatedness that makes possible to define it as a practice of situated cripstemologies. Let me take a moment to consider further how the allusion to complex embodiment contributes to our understanding of Open Access. The reference to complex embodiment enables us to distance Papalia’s Open Access practices from simulation theory. That is, Open Access is a mutual exchange which, however, does not entail putting myself in the other’s shoes, because it recognizes the incommensurability of nuanced experiences of disability and the socially situated character of such self-identity and point of orientation. Therefore, Open Access is a system of embodied learning that generates situated cripstemologies which go beyond the dichotomy between understanding the body *either* as a social construct *or* a phenomenological lived reality, and instead is framed in a conciliatory model of embodiment which considers that our experience of being in the world is informed *both* by social representations of the body *and* our individual phenomenological experience. In this sense, complex embodiment bridges a phenomenological standpoint epistemology with identity politics stemming from intersectionality. Siebers theorizes this hybridation of social constructionism and philosophical realism (Siebers, 2008: 72) as follows:

situated knowledge does not rely only on changing perspectives. Situated knowledge adheres in embodiment. The disposition of the body determines perspectives, but it also spices these perspectives with phenomenological knowledge-lifeworld experience- that affects the interpretation of perspective ... The theory of complex embodiment views the economy between social representations and the body not as unidirectional as in the social

model, or nonexistent as in the medical model, but as reciprocal. Complex embodiment theorizes the body and its representations as mutually transformative. (Siebers, 2008: 23)

Therefore, if Papalia defines Open Access as a system of embodied learning based in complex embodiment, it follows that it takes into consideration this transactional model between phenomenological experience and social representations. For this reason, practices emerging in such framework will be far from simulation games where participants «experience their body relative to their usual embodiment, and they become so preoccupied with sensations of bodily inadequacy that they cannot perceive the extent to which their ‘disability’ results from social rather than physical causes» (Siebers, 2008: 29). Social practices and other art forms within Access Art move away from acts of individual imagination towards acts of collective or cultural imagination. I want to propose that in Access Art we can take a step beyond and cultivate what Maxine Greene calls *social imagination*. In *Releasing the Imagination*, she defines social imagination as

The capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools. As I write of social imagination, I am reminded of Jean-Paul Sartre’s declaration that it is on the day that we can conceive of a different state of affairs that a new light falls on our troubles and our suffering that we decide that these are unbearable. (Greene, 1995: 5)

Greene considers that exercising our social imagination is a way for social change and political action, because when we realise how our conditions are unbearable, we feel a call for action to transform the current state of affairs. I will explore at length how such call may be articulated in Papalia’s practice in the next chapter. The fourth tenet of Open Access is connected to the aforementioned interrupting character of Access Check Ins, broadening its focus towards the *disruptive* character of Open Access:

Open Access disrupts the disabling conditions that limit one’s agency and potential to thrive. It reimagines normalcy as a continuum of embodiments, identities, realities and learning styles, and operates under the tenet that interdependence is central to a radical restructuring of power. (Papalia, 2018)

Three ideas are remarkable about this tenet: first, it establishes Open Access as a disruptive practice which aims to hinder and ‘fictionally’ suspend ableist structures that disable us; second, it centres *agency* as a core component of creating accessibility within Open Access; third, it recognises the political and cultural dimension of Open Access practises that go beyond individual experience in order to challenge ongoing structures

of power. How are these three notions interrelated? In Open Access frameworks, there is a redistribution of weights in agency, in such a way that ongoing structures of power are challenged and disassembled, to be replaced by temporary structures that are born out of mutual exchange and perpetual negotiation. Moreover, this mutual exchange honours a Deweyan notion of *growth in diversity* by welcoming «a continuum of embodiments, identities, realities, and learning styles» (Papalia, 2018). This fictional interruption is not limited to the space and time of the practice, that is, ideally Open Access practises are not a one-time experiment that remains disconnected from social and political issues, but rather they aim to affect the disabling structures that govern contemporary institutions. For instance, Papalia's Access Art piece *The New Access Consortium Presents: A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery* (2015) led to a long-term process of collaboration with the Vancouver Art Gallery, which engaged in a series of accessibility training for all the staff in order to publish an Access Statement and change its accessibility policies. Finally, the fifth Open Access tenet states the operational definition of Access that Papalia reiterates in most of his works and workshops, that is:

Open Access is a temporary, collectively held space where participants can find comfort in disclosing their needs and preferences with one another. It is a responsive support network that adapts as needs and available resources change.

Defining Open Access as a temporary, collectively held space of mutual care, where everyone's needs are welcome and honored, distances this conception of access from bottom-down accessibility measures and policies which are standard and, above all, unidirectional. Open Access is based on a shared agency among participants, which enter in a temporary agreement to be responsive to each other's needs. Therefore, in Open Access a redistribution of salience occurs, where day-to-day mindless individuality shifts towards an experience of marked interdependence and constant transaction between bodyminds and their environment. Furthermore, the fifth tenet lays out the spatio-temporal configuration of Open Access practices. On the one hand, they have the structure of *events* because they are temporary – only collective activity holds their existence, so even Access Art artworks which are not performative are only sustained by their interaction with human and non-human others. Including the time profile in the definition of Open Access also entails that the temporality of this collectively held space can be disrupted and adapted to everyone's needs, for instance by slowing down decision

making. On the other hand, space is also arranged according to collective agreements, in such a way that it fits the access needs of all of those present. This spatio-temporal articulation constitutes an ever-changing and ever-adapting *responsive support network*. In a way, the fifth tenet provides a definition of a dynamic space⁴² shaped by care ethics and responsiveness to others, adding a material configuration that is usually untended when discussing intersubjective care.

10. Collective liberation

We move together as people with mixed abilities, multiracial, multi-gendered, mixed class, across the sexual spectrum, with a vision that leaves no body/mind behind. (Sins Invalid, 2019: 26)

The tenth and last principle of Disability Justice is collective liberation. We can understand collective liberation as the transformation of collective access into an organized, political and explicitly activist process. Therefore, collective liberation acts as a prospective normative state of affairs that shapes Disability Justice and Access Art practices. When introducing processual understandings of access, I have already alluded to Mia Mingus' concept of *liberatory access* (Mingus, 2018) and access as love. In Disability Justice literature and practice, there tends to be an equivalence between Open Access, liberatory access and Access Art, to the point where these notions can be interchangeable. From this equation, we can further delimit the scope of Open Access and Access Art practices. The intersections between liberation and access enable us to establish that *in order for an aesthetic practise to be considered an Access Art practise,*

⁴² The notion of dynamic space echoes the philosophy of space developed by Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Bachelard establishes two pairs of correlatives that are the touchstones for his development of the creative imagination. These pairs are dynamic hand / geometric hand; and dynamic space / geometric space. Each of these elements can only be understood as in agonistic tension with the other ones, in a complex tetrad in which they find themselves entangled. I will argue that dynamic space as defined by Bachelard has the potential to support caring networks that adapt to the needs of those who are present because it entails a phenomenological awareness of our connectedness to our environment and to others in a way that promotes creative engagement with our surroundings. This idea helps us to account for the notion of intimacy built in Open Access, since as Magrini argues in reference to Bachelard's conception of dwelling in proximity, the geometric hand «can be situated quite close to a [person] with whom I'm conversing—in Cartesian space—and yet be at an insurmountable ontological distance from that same [person] in terms of our... experience instantiating a truly 'meaningful' and ontological connection between us» (Magrini, 2017: 763) – whereas in dynamic space an ethically charged relationship with others can emerge from a phenomenologically caring involvement in closeness.

it has to be shaped by a liberatory end and must contribute to the progress towards collective liberation.

As Mingus argues, access for the sake of access is not liberatory (Mingus, 2018). Complying with standard measures or checklists that do not transform policymaking is not liberatory – on the contrary, because it focuses on stating short-term measures of accessibility which do not enable any agency to people with disabilities in the decision-making process. This lack of agency and self-advocacy that people with disabilities usually experience in institutional settings is precisely what collective liberation aims to mend. Disability-led collective liberation thematizes the neoliberal dimension of ableism and how deregulated capitalism and its politics of austerity and productivity shape experiences of disability based on oppression and loss. As McRuer argues when presenting aspiration as a neoliberalist concept that focuses on individual achievement rather than collective liberation, neoliberalism has weaponized the cultural signs of disability to build an ableist paradigm for cultural cognition that regards body-minds' diversity as *less than* and therefore constitutes an obstacle for the political organization of collectives to fight for emancipation. What McRuer designates as *cripping development*:

we need to read beyond the cultural signs of disability that are identified and made useful for neoliberalism. Crippling development or gentrification in particular, entails reading beyond the cultural signs of disability we think we know and recognizing displacement and dispossession in the shadow of incorporation ... Even if and as “disability” is sometimes and in some locations given pride of place, unruly bodies are moved elsewhere, evicted, relocated ... Such literal displacement of unruly bodies, or bodies inconvenient to and for processes of neoliberal development, not only ensnares already disabled bodies or minds, but inescapably produces more disability and illness. And this production of more disability and illness is a straightforward fact about precarity; I do not put it forward here as a simplistic or ableist lament about more disability in the world, but rather as a recognition that we need more ways of talking about precarity and embodiment in global disability movements. (McRuer, 2018: 174-5)

McRuer argument connects concerns about homelessness, migration, and humanitarian crisis with disability through the notion of displacement. This connection is relevant to us regarding the principle of collective liberation because it brings together emancipatory movements that share the same goals as global disability movements. By bringing in embodied perspectives on the experiences of displacement and dispossession into aesthetic practices and by making it affordable to the beholder, Access Art can help

to raise awareness about the need to collectivize emancipatory movements and to weave webs of solidarity and therefore change cultural signs of disability and maybe create breaches in the ableist paradigm of cultural cognition.

Furthermore, Access Art engages in cross-disability solidarity with liberatory movements led by bodyminds which have been historically pathologized and policed, such as Fat liberation, Trans liberation, Black women's liberation, environmental liberation (the connection between environmental justice and Black liberation), Indigenous liberation, activist ageing, reproductive justice, or anti-psychiatry. Disability-led collective liberation moves together with these communities, reclaiming the right of all bodyminds to exist in public space and not be considered disposable or invalid. In 'Intersections of disability justice, racial justice and environmental justice' (2018), Catherine Jampel vindicates the necessity of a reciprocal recognition between racial justice and environmental justice movements, and disability justice. She examines the shared intersectional approach of these movements and defines them as a critical praxis for collective liberation based on an analytical strategy (Jampel, 2018: 2).

Although it is listed among the rest of the principles, collective liberation operates in a different manner in Disability Justice – it is not a shaping force, but rather a regulatory ideal that situates and orients all activism, theory and artistic practice within the movement. For this reason, the structure that has been followed so far to examine each principle will be consciously interrupted, in an effort to maintain Disability Justice's resistance to be fully integrated into an academic discipline. Collective liberation constitutes the most radical idea of Disability Justice, in the sense that it roots the whole woven ivy that keeps growing as the movement expands itself and builds capacity. Instead of over-theorizing it, the goal of collective liberation will be assumed here as a given, vindicating the «ferocious need for liberation» (Clare, 2017) that is the horizon that opens the space for both Critical Disability Studies and Disability Justice praxis. The vindication of liberation prechambers here the in-depth analysis of the case studies in Access Arts which have shaped this research, since it is only this regulatory ideal that makes sense of academic attempts to intersect with Disability Justice, as Eli Clare bluntly puts it:

If there is to be research, writing, art, teaching, conversation, inventing, theorizing, and strategizing called Disability Studies, Critical Disability Studies, Crip theory, Crip

Studies; they must include the thousands upon thousands of people who don't read *DSQ*, who have no access to higher education, who have been shut out of academia. We need Disability Studies that is relevant to folks locked up in prisons and detention centers; to people struggling for housing, food, and the most basic of healthcare in this era of Trump; to people disabled through war, genocide, and environmental destruction ...

We need Disability Studies, Critical Disability Studies, Crip theory, and Crip Studies to resist white supremacy at every turn; to never forget the million ways in which disability, race, class, sexuality, gender, immigration, capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism are interlocked. The work done in the name of these fields of study must be shaped not by the quest for tenure and academic success but by the ferocious need for liberation. Otherwise this work isn't about justice, and to be blunt, we simply cannot afford any theory or study connected to disability that is not in service to liberation. (Eli Clare, 2017)

CHAPTER IV. Access Arts: Stories of a community in the making

Since the emergence of Disability Justice in the early 2000s, founded by disabled, queer, trans and low-income folks involved in the performance art collective Sins Invalid, artistic practices have been at the core of the liberatory movement. queer, disabled, nonbinary femme writer and activist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha very often recalls a conversation with Disability Justice founder Patty Berne, where she explained to Lakshmi the choice of doing performance art:

you know Leah, I could try to talk to disabled white people and try to get them not to be racist 'till I'm blue in the face. And I could do a million workshops for ablebodied radical people of color, trying to educate them about ableism and trying to get them to care about us... Or I could do a three-minute piece of performance art that really gets into people's heads and gets in all of their dreams and nightmares and unspoken thoughts about disability and racism and ableism and I could just fuck their shit up. I'm gonna do that one. (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018a)

Berne's quote summarizes a general impulse within Disability Justice collectives that has brought them to express their demands in artistic languages, vindicating the generative and creative potential of disabled stories and lived experiences. During the last decade (2015-2023), many artists, writers and performers within Disability Justice have gathered around new ideas of access, which move beyond rights-based and compliance-based accounts of accessibility to understanding access as a collective ongoing process based on creativity, improvisation and collective care. Most of these practitioners align themselves under Carmen Papalia's framework of access as agency, and the five tenets of his Open Access manifesto published in 2015. Before presenting some stories of experiences within the Access Arts milieu, I find it necessary to understand how this movement is a grassroots movement that has been created by building capacity for support, mutual aid, and care among folks. For them, access needs are systematically ignored by standard access in institutionalized settings and by an ableist social structure whose value system uses «purported "fitness/health/wellness," as well as age, location, and other factors to make decisions about worthiness and value» based on «societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness» (Lewis, 2022), as stated in the working definition of ableism by Talila A. Lewis that is currently endorsed by Sins Invalid and Patty Berne (Berne, 2023). Therefore, the stories presented here are stories of resistance, of a community in the making that has had

to create alternative gathering spaces to leave no one behind and where, in radical contrast with oppressive ableism grounded in eugenics, value is not based on the ability to produce, reproduce or excel (Lewis, 2022), but rather it is assumed from the beginning. Sins Invalid has denominated these spaces *crip-centric liberated zones* (Kafai, 2021). These physically shared spaces or digital care networks provide a matrix that assumes the right to exist and the value of all our bodyminds beyond capitalist-informed value systems where one needs to ‘earn’ the right to exist. Crip-centric liberated zones recognize the worth of bodyminds and specially of disabled bodyminds as central, and not as an exception. Within Access Arts, these liberated zones are generated through artistic practices that have creative access as a medium. That is, as developed above, in Access Art, access is conceived as first and foremost a collective need that is imbricated in the creative process from the outset, and which constitutes a fertile ground to build creative tactics of resistance. Due to its emphasis on collectivity, the Access Arts case studies presented in this chapter concur in having a common goal of crafting a *shared experience*, in particular a shared aesthetic experience accessible for those who are present. I hope to be able to convey how behind each individual story and practice within Access Arts there is an infrastructure of friends and co-conspirators, to use Papalia’s term, who provide a community that is the condition of possibility for making sense of these artistic practices as a reorganizational practice rooted in Disability Justice principles as its shaping guidelines.¹

The following are stories of key agents who have pushed forward Access Art as practitioners and activists, not only breaking ground in institutional exhibition spaces, but also promoting each other’s work and building a community that has grown exponentially. The core interdependence of Access Art will become evident as we follow the path of key pioneer Carmen Papalia as built upon kinship networks and collaborations with fundamental artists, curators, and practitioners throughout the artistic projects

¹ Following Carmen Papalia’s practice and my progressive involvement in Disability Justice-informed creative spaces as a possible path of introducing oneself into disability arts and culture, this chapter aims to be a map for anyone who is either interested in honoring these practices, or who are tracing their own care webs and are navigating the complexities of trying to find community in a dominant culture which is incapable of holding spaces for Disability Culture. Since community building is at the core of Access Art, I have deemed it relevant to explain in each of the cases how I connected with them and the kind of collaboration and conversation we have been able to establish during my research, a storytelling which is expanded in the Appendix 2 of this dissertation (364).

examined, as their production is always imbricated in complex networks of reciprocity and care that are essential to make sense of each project. I will set the scene with a concise profile of Amanda Cachia, whose work has been instrumental in building Access Arts. As a curator, Cachia gave many of the subsequently prolific artists their first opportunity to show their work in an exhibition, which endowed them with institutional recognition as professional artists and opened up the possibility for many of them to become full-time creators – as well as access to funding and economically solvent artistic residencies. Secondly, I will present the stories of Carmen Papalia, and his collaboration with key practitioners Matthew Rader, Colin von Uchelen, Fayen d’Evie, and Georgina Kleege, through a trail across his main projects. I depart from Papalia as a pioneering figure in Access Art and a highly recognized practitioner to explore the different creative tactics developed within Disability Justice-informed artistic communities – for this reason, he will be the core case from which tentacles emerge, affording me the opportunity to tell the stories of Papalia’s currently most active co-conspirators. The choice of case studies has not been casual; beyond the effective interactions during the research process with these artists, the choice responds to the criteria that can be announced as the following questions:

1. *ADVOCACY*: How is each practitioner involved in Disability Justice and Access Arts advocacy?
2. *CONTEXT AND PODS*: In what context do they develop their practice and where can we locate it within the Access Arts community if we mapped its bonds as pods?
3. *CREATIVE ACCESS TACTICS*: What creative access tactics does their artistic practice provide?
4. *DJ PRINCIPLES*: How are these tactics relevant to Disability Justice principles? Can we map a correlation between the tactics, the principles involved and the philosophical kindred approaches traced in the previous chapter?
5. *TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL*: What are the political reorganizational implications of the sensory experience afforded by the practitioners?

Through Carmen Papalia’s main projects and collaborations between 2010 and 2022, I show how Access Arts are artistic practices grounded in and shaped by the principles of Disability Justice which, as developed in the previous chapter, come from a long tradition of critical theory and liberation movements that are mobilized in each step

towards social transformation enacted by these artists. For this reason, the central goal of this argumentation is to align the practices presented in Disability Justice-informed Access Arts with a culture of opposition and creative tactics that strive to create spaces of resistance to the multiple matrixes of oppression that historically marginalized groups experience in their own flesh.

1. Prelude: Amanda Cachia, infrastructural activist and community weaver

Amanda Cachia is a curator, writer, and art historian who has been promoting disability art activism from an intersectional point of view for more than fifteen years. Her curatorship defies dynamics of masculine and ableist hegemonies in museums and gallery spaces. In parallel with her career as a curator, Cachia has been writing, teaching, and researching around the issue of «how disabled embodiment offers epistemologies for activist and curatorial praxis in conversation with gender, race and sexuality, and decolonizing museum practices» (Cachia, 2023). Through her pioneering experiments in considering access a creative medium, Cachia has become a key figure of the current landscape of Access Art, being also one of the trailblazers to coin the term and develop a curatorial discourse around it. For our purposes, it is worth recalling Cachia's contributions to a pedagogy of revisionist art histories and her critical disability curatorial practice in developing creative strategies to curate access. Finally, I will emphasize her vital role in what Smith denominates “infrastructural activism” curatorship (Smith, 2012: 252, quoted in Cachia, 2015:135), changing institutional infrastructures from within to make room for Disability Arts and Culture. Concerning Cachia's contribution to a pedagogy of revisionist art histories, both as a lecturer and as a writer, she has deconstructed hegemonic art history and revisited it from the lens of Critical Disability Studies. Following this strategy, she has retraced genealogies that go from the nineteenth century to contemporary practices, considering how the emergence of institutionalized industrial medical models of normalcy and rehabilitation coexist with the emergence of avant-garde movements like Surrealism (Cachia, 2016). Cachia revisits art history from a CDS intersectional standpoint unearthing the ways in which modern and contemporary art and design practices have informed disability art activism. This hermeneutic enrichment goes both ways, since Cachia's revisionist art history also borrows contemporary concepts and creative strategies to account for historical artistic practices.

Notable examples include her reading of Mitchell's narrative prosthesis (Cachia, 2019d) and Tobin Siebers' disability aesthetics (Cachia, 2020) and complex embodiment (Cachia, 2017).

Secondly, Cachia has been a trailblazer in critical disability curatorship of Access Art, developing both conceptual and physical possibilities for exhibiting artistic practices where the idea of access is central in the artworks. In line with this, Cachia designs exhibition spaces considering access a productive force in the curating process, integrating it from the very first moment of the design process. This mode of curating entails what she denominates "disabling" the museum (Cachia, 2015: 135), that is, displacing sensorial hierarchies and the disciplinary distribution of the senses that usually govern museum spaces in favor of a «multimedia, multisensory exhibition that broke with the Ocularcentric by embracing myriad modes of perception» (Cachia, 2019c: 144). In her essay «The politics of creative access: Guidelines for a critical dis/ability curatorial practice» (Cachia, 2019d: 142-145), the curator offers some work-in-progress guidelines for creative access, «beginning with the strategic and concluding with the tactical, with the same spirit of revolutionary intent that an artist has historically developed through the manifesto» (Cachia, 2019d: 141). Her vindication of creative access as a central component of curatorship has a "revolutionary intent" because it denounces the blatant absence and acknowledgement of access practices in curatorial departments: in sharp contrast, Cachia's exhibitions are oriented towards activating the sensorial qualities of objects and spaces, challenging Ocularcentric understandings of museum spaces. Guiding her practice by this multisensorial approach has modified her curatorial strategies: prioritizing works that can be touched, creating displays that can be circumnavigated, introducing soundscapes, or changing the height at which artworks are hung. In summary, her practice embodies the way in which shifting towards an approach that privileges creative access entails a radical rethinking of how we design and experience museum spaces. As Georgina Kleege often asserts, introducing access and touch «changes spatial arrangements: having an artwork that is meant to be touched up against the wall is not going to be optimal» (Crochet, Papalia, Mashburn and Kleege, 2022) Indeed, touch is central to Cachia's critical disability curatorship, since the redistribution of the senses in creative access aims to dismantle Ocularcentric curatorial practices and introduce multisensorial modalities to favor the senses that have been historically marginalized, and

since the seventeenth century touch has been erased from museums because, continuing with Kleege:

stereotypical and unthinking understandings about sensory perception, touch is described as occupying a less lofty, less intellectual rung of the hierarchy of the senses. Touch is associated with sensuality, even sexuality, but also with the emotions. (Kleege, 2013)

Against this erasure of touch, which has been analyzed further in the second chapter of this dissertation, Cachia proposes a way of curating where «a hierarchy of senses that privileges vision explodes in profound direction» (Cachia, 2019d: 101). This explosive engagement with multisensorial modalities connects Cachia’s practice with the explosive character of liberatory movements of Disability Justice. The main point of connection is how the curator works from a dream of disabled futures and of what Lakshmi calls prefigurative politics (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018a: 149-155), that is, acting “as if” reality was otherwise. In Cachia’s case, she structures her practice “as if” exhibition spaces were already spaces for “sensorial culture” rather than for visual culture, shaping her creative access strategies through a provocation she formulates in the following “what if” statement:

What would happen if the museum began to rethink of itself as an institution for sensorial culture rather than purely visual culture? For example, “haptic activism” suggests that the navigation of space can be experienced through tactility and need not rely on the typically predominant sense of vision. (Cachia, 2019a: 204)

Cachia has developed different tactics of “haptic activism” in her curatorial practice, developing complex multisensory exhibition spaces among which one can highlight *What Can a Body Do?* (2012), *Performing Crip Time: Bodies in Deliberate Motion* (2014), *LOUD Silence* (2014-2015), *The Flesh of the World* (2015), *Marking Blind* (2015), and *Sweet Gongs Vibrating* (2016). Her latest contribution to critical disability curatorship is the edited volume *Curating Access: Disability Art Activism and Creative Accommodation* (2022), which focuses on creative access in disability art activism, bringing together over 40 international artists, activists and scholars who reflect upon new notions of access in the artworld. Cachia’s capacity of community building brings us to the latest dimension of her practice I will examine: her task as an infrastructural activist involved and committed to bringing historically marginalized artists to positions of leadership and agency where they can produce and show their art *in*

their own terms. Cachia's idea of "curator as infrastructural activist" (Cachia, 2015) enables us to understand her role in the aforementioned community in the making of Access Art.

In her critical disability curatorial practice, Cachia conceives her task as a «platform-building practice [which] prompts curators as 'process shapers' and 'programme builders' to work within the resources an institution offers yet also find freedom in public spaces, places, the virtual domain and other institutional infrastructures» (Cachia, 2015: 135). For more than a decade, Amanda Cachia has had an essential role in both institutional recognition and critical reception of living disabled artists, providing not only professional opportunities and exhibition spaces, but also a different standpoint towards art history that enabled Disability Justice and Access Art practitioners to make sense of their creative practice in relation to a genealogy of artists and performers. The effective power of such a genealogy of ancestors and the artistic tactics and critical discourse they provide should not be underestimated, and has played a crucial part in establishing Access Art as a field and as a praxis rooted in Disability Justice principles that keeps gaining more and more presence in museums and galleries globally. It is no coincidence, then, that the following stories have intersected and been informed up to some point by Cachia's practice and discourse – the first case study presented in this dissertation, Carmen Papalia, may be the most notably marked by Cachia, since she was the first curator to show Papalia's work in the exhibition *Medusa's Mirror: Fears, Spells & Other Transfixed Positions* at Pro Arts (Oakland, CA) in 2011, making imaginable for Papalia – as she has made for many – the possibility of being a full-time professional artist.

2. Carmen Papalia, a path from self-advocacy to crafting disabled futures

Carmen Papalia is a Vancouver-based nonvisual artist. For more than twenty years, Papalia has been developing social practice experiments and curating spaces around his experience as a self-described nonvisual learner (Papalia, 2014a: 357) that challenge the social constructions around bodyminds with different relationships with sight and visual learning. His interest in nonvisual space began after he had to adapt to living as a legally blind subject due to two conditions that heavily shaped his practice, medically called

Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) and Sickle Cell Anemia. While RP causes progressive sight loss, Sickle Cell Anaemia affects haemoglobin and causes chronic pain that can peak during pain flares. However, Papalia insists on the Disability Justice principle of wholeness and states that he «never thought of it as a loss. It was changing over time and I made different negotiations in my life around those changes. I thought of it as opening up my experience vs. limiting my experience» (Kinross, 2021). On the contrary, the artist considers both nonvisual experience and pain as generative forces that pushed him to access a nonvisual realm. As Papalia narrates:

When I started to direct my senses away from what is visual, and began to listen, smell, taste and touch my surroundings, I realized that there was a vast and vibrant dimension, in non- visual space, that I had access to. I am still learning how to appreciate the nuances of this space, and have taken to inviting others to help acknowledge, map and name aspects of it so it may become a realm that more people will choose to occupy. (Kinross, 2021)

These invitations to occupy a nonvisual learner are materialized in Papalia's experiences, which are never individual, since he values «learning exchanges that are mutual, interdependent and collective» which take place within «a strong community of allies and mentors» (Papalia, 2013b). This community can be traced back to Papalia's formative years in an academic environment where accessibility was an afterthought. He earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts from Simon Fraser University (Vancouver) and completed his training with an MA in Fine Arts from Portland State University. During his academic career, he was heavily influenced by R. Murray Schafer listening strategies and his World Soundscape Project (WSP), an established research group at Simon Fraser University during the sixties and seventies. As the artist declared himself

when I stopped using vision as my central reference point, I started trusting my non-visual senses and really exercising my non-visual senses. I think this goes back to when I was in my undergrad at SFU. And I was taking acoustic communications with Barry Truax, who is one of the first few researchers who were studying, you know, the soundscape and acoustic ecology through work with R. Murray Schafer. And so I was studying with Barry and was asked to, you know, kind of start actively listening and listening more critically. And I just spent a lot of time outdoors in my neighborhood and various other public spaces learning to listen. (Papalia, Abahmed and Etmanski, 2021)

Papalia has used Schafer's focus on the sonic environment and "ear cleaning" exercises to fight noise pollution in pieces like *For Your Ears Only* (2013d). This listening exercise took place in the MoMA of New York and consisted of one-on-one tours guided

by Papalia which «were accompanied by an edition of ear cleaning kits that included a pair of disposable earplugs and a number of prompts for self-guided listening experiences in the museum» (Papalia, 2013e). Before the tour, participants were invited to put on their earplugs and find something “rough”, “bitter” and “loud” (MoMA, 2013). Papalia’s early interest in soundscapes already hinted at broader practices that explored multisensory environments where visual information was not prioritized. He reminisces how a turn in his work occurred after meeting Georgina Kleege. According to Papalia (Kleege, Papalia and Gissen, 2022), it was Kleege who first challenged his ideas of access: why can’t visual descriptions be creative, poetic and literarily pleasurable? Why do we have to be thankful for any accessibility measures we are offered instead of demanding access practices we actually enjoy? As Papalia immersed himself in Disability Justice communities, his artistic practice shifted towards a core intention to broaden our ideas of access, favoring agency and collective mutual support. In his artist statement for the 2013 Wynn Newhouse Awards, Papalia described his practice in Access, Art and Activism as follows:

I design experiences that invite those involved to expand their perceptual mobility and claim access to public and institutional spaces. Often requiring trust and closeness, these engagements disorient the participant while introducing new modes of orientation that allow for perceptual and sensorial discovery. Each walking tour, collaborative performance, public intervention, museum project and art object that I produce is a temporary system of access—a gesture that contributes to a productive understanding of accessibility. As an open-sourcing of my own access, my work makes visible the opportunities for learning and knowing that become available through the non-visual senses. It is a chance to unlearn looking and to take ones first few steps into a non-visual world. (Papalia, 2013b)

Currently, Papalia centers his work on organizing strategies and improvisation that take different shapes depending on the collaborators, *co-conspirators*, of each project. Although the background reflection on access is ever-present in his work, to account for the strategies he has developed we can divide his career into three (overlapping and interdependent) periods. It is worth noting that currently there is only one published scholarly analysis of Papalia’s work: Whitney Mashburn’s *Let’s Keep in Touch: Conversations about Access and Tactility* (2016). Mashburn has been in collaboration with Papalia since 2016, and she dedicated her MA Art and Art History: Critical and Curatorial Studies dissertation, defended in the University of Louisville, to examining the dimensions of tactility in Carmen’s work from a curatorial perspective, drawing on notions of relational, social and dialogical aesthetics. Although Mashburn provides a

highly valuable insight into Papalia's practice and history, she takes an approach that categorizes the artist's practice into two sorts: Mobility Devices and Participatory Interventions that remain static constant categories. To understand the co-generative relationship between Papalia's Access Art and the Disability Justice movement, I will provide a sequencing of his practices that encompasses the last fifteen years of intensive production structure in the three aforementioned periods.

First, what could be called a Cane-centered Period, which goes from his formative years until 2013 – until the first iteration *Mobility Device*. The works developed in this period are characterized by a reflection and critique of social markers of disability and blindness, with a special focus on the white cane. As Papalia explains:

ever since I started using a cane, I've modified it. And so currently, I use a graphite cane. It used to have the white and red tape reflective tape on it, but I peeled it off. And now the cane is just, it's black, it just has the graphite material showing, and a wooden handle. (Papalia, Abahmed & Etmanski, 2021)

Since 2007, a series of alternative detection canes, among which are *Long Cane* (2009), an aluminum and carbon fiber white cane that Papalia activates during improvised performances navigating crowded public spaces; and *Mobility Device* (2013c), an improvisation performance where Papalia «replaces his detection cane with an alternative system that serves his mobility as he explores an unfamiliar site or public space» (Papalia, 2013c): a marching band². These series grew out of a rejection of the medical industrial complex institutions that set the white cane as a marker of disability, as Papalia puts it: «ever since I adopted the cane, I've just, I've modified it and it's because I, I'm not in alignment with the institution that provided me with the cane» (Papalia, Cachia and Nugent, 2021). What marks these projects is a relative compliance with the standards of performance art and of the role of the performer as an author. Even though some of the experiments entail a collaboration, as is the case with *Mobility Device*, Papalia is in charge of individually designing, facilitating, and performing the piece as a central agent.

² Some iterations of this reflection take place in the subsequent period, but the creative process shifts from a focus on the object towards a focus on the design process itself and the interdependence and collaboration it entails. Two notable examples of further iterations of the cane period are *White Cane Amplified* (2015), where Papalia replaces his white cane with a megaphone; and *Loud Cane 1.0* (2015), designed during the residence with students in Sara Hendren's "Investigating Normal" Adaptive and Assistive Technologies Lab at Olin College of Engineering.

The second period is a short time span that goes from *The Touchy Subject* tours in 2013, until the publication of the Open Access manifesto in 2015. In this stage, we already find a shift of focus towards centrally collaborative dynamics. This emphasis runs in parallel with an increased recognition of Papalia's work in institutional structures and discourses: with awards like the Wynn Newhouse Award (2013) and the Adam Reynolds Memorial Bursary (2014), and residencies in both museum spaces – at the Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana California (2013) and the Model Contemporary Arts Centre in Ireland (2015) - and academic spaces – with Sarah Hendren's Adaptive and Assistive Technologies Lab at Olin College of Engineering (2015). I will argue that it is with the projects of this period that Papalia fully develops what I denominate the “foot in the door” strategies: a tactic of infrastructural activism that consists of using his platform as a recognized artist to mine the authorship dynamics of museum institutions by “crashing the party” as many collaborators as possible, thus becoming a medium to dismantle exclusionary dynamics and introducing in the museum artists and activists that are deemed outsiders or intruders in virtue of ableist power structures that shape artistic institutions. The exhibition *A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery*, celebrated in Gallery Gachet in 2015, is paradigmatic of the disruptive introduction of invisibilized collectives into museum environments as a tool for institutional critique. Because of Papalia's constant trespassing of the borders between institutional and non-institutional structures in this period, and the double-agent character of his serpentine motion, I propose to call this interval the “Borderlands Period”. This period can be closed with the Open Access manifesto, later republished in 2018 in *Canadian Arts* as «An Accessibility Manifesto for the Arts». As discussed in the DJ principle of Collective Access (see above), Papalia proposes five tenets that demand a reconceptualization of access as centered in agency and mutual exchange as follows:

Open Access relies on who is present, what their needs are and how they can find support with each other and in their communities. It is a perpetual negotiation of trust between those who elect to be in support of one another in a mutual exchange.

Open Access is radically different than a model in which a set of policies is employed in order to facilitate a common experience for a group with definitive needs. It acknowledges that each participant carries a body of local knowledge and is an expert in their own right.

Open access is the root system of embodied learning. It cultivates trust among those involved and enables each member to self-identify and occupy a point of orientation that is based in complex embodiment.

Open Access interrupts the disabling power structures that limit one's agency and potential to thrive. It reimagines normalcy as a continuum of embodiments, identities, realities and learning styles, and operates under the tenet that care and a shared accountability among participants are core components of liberated space.

Open Access is emergent, collectively-held space in which members can find comfort in disclosing their needs and preferences with one another. It is a responsive support network that adapts as needs and available resources change. (Papalia, 2018)

As Rader gathers in *Visual Inspection*, Papalia's tenets are «in direct opposition to the concepts of universal accessibility and universal design», understanding access as

the self-elected participation in a supportive community [which] lead to, in this post-disabled imaginary, emergent, collectively held space in which members can find comfort in disclosing their needs and preferences with one another. (Rader, 2019: 159)

Finally, the third period that we can mark in Papalia's practice runs from 2015 until 2023. It is possibly the most difficult to account for because it requires us to do a Foucauldian archaeology of the present while we are immersed in the current projects, with no temporal distance. However, some elements of this period can be delineated, each of them connected to a long-term project: these are infrastructural community-building and discursive development. In virtue of these elements, we can denominate this period as the "Architectural Period". Firstly, there is a second shift which moves Papalia's work from collaboration to community. Relationships are no longer bidirectional creative collaborations, but rather complex networks of care are built around each project, in a way that connects multiple agents in an infrastructure that does not prioritize or center the author anymore. Whitney Mashburn seems to note this shift as well when she analyses Papalia's role in the audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2015. She argues that

Papalia's leadership, in promoting accessibility, is growing and developing as part of his practice. This example shows the rich potential of what can be realized with diverse voices all pointing to gaps in accessibility and giving suggestions for change. (Mashburn, 2016: 39)

Therefore, Mashburn anticipates a move in direction towards more collective dynamics with "diverse voices" that entails a change with respect to the Borderlands Period (2013-2016). Even though there were processes of mutual learning and

collaboration in the second period, they still privileged Papalia's role as an educator, where workshop dynamics were followed by participation and feedback. In this third interval, the Architectural Period (2016-2023), the methodologies developed in the Borderlands, such as the government strategies of the New Access Consortium for the Vancouver Art Gallery, are used to design structures where the hierarchy between Papalia as an educator and the rest of participants is utterly dissolved. These new structures are paradigmatically manifested in *Provisional Structures* (2022-2023), discussed below.

The network-conception of projects coincides in time with Papalia's collaboration with Vancouver-based designer and architect Michael Lis, which has introduced Papalia to architectural methodologies. I believe that some borrowings from architectural jargon can help us to account for the network-like infrastructure that has been characterizing Papalia's latest projects. Specifically, Papalia draws on scaffolding and falsework to develop projects. Falsework is «temporary construction to support arches and similar structures while the mortar or concrete is setting or the steel is being joined» (Britannica, n.d.). I will develop how Papalia uses falsework and scaffolding to think of his projects as temporary structures that are to leave a more permanent architecture when discussing *Provisional Structures* in what follows. Secondly, the third period is marked by a rising significance of academic and conceptual contributions. That is, not only formally is Papalia's research increasingly located in academic environments – like UAL's project *Beyond the Visual* or Berkeley's RadMad Lab – but also there is a growing preoccupation with the discourse that accounts for artistic practice. Most of the discursive development performed by Papalia falls into the long-term collaboration with Whitney Mashburn: since 2016, their collaborative project *Let's Keep in Touch* aims to develop a vocabulary for haptic descriptions in museum engagements (2016), an objective that intersects with Kleege and D'Evie's project *The Gravity, the Levity* also discussed below. The spaces of discussion of Papalia's work and the recognition of importance of developing a narrative and conceptual framework are distinctive of the discursive emphasis of this last period of production.

When considering his practice as a whole, three themes stand out as constant loci for reflection and experimentation: the epistemological potential of nonvisual senses, underrepresentation of those with lived experience of disability in leadership roles, and

collective responsibility around care and access needs. Throughout the case studies that emphasize his collaboration with a wider kinship network of Access Art practitioners, I will layout these themes, correlate them with the creative tactics that Papalia enacts and connect them with the principles of Disability Justice as they have been developed in the previous chapter. This analysis will be carried out considering two elements that traverse Papalia's practice: the Open Access manifesto he published in 2015, and the foundation of The Open Access Foundation for Arts and Culture (OAFAC) in 2021. From this standpoint, a narrative for four of his main contributions will be developed: *Blind Field Shuttle*, *Mobility Device*, *A Touchy Subject*, *A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery* and *Provisional Structures 1* and *2*; and for three of his latest and most significant collaborations with Access Arts community members: Colin von Uchelen, Georgina Kleege and Fayen D'Evie. Across the case studies, it will also become salient how Papalia's self-advocacy as a nonvisual learner has made touch a privilege sense in aesthetic experience to develop creative tactics that resist Ocularcentric artistic cultures rooted in ableist values of perfection, fitness, and normalcy.

3. Shared nonvisual learning experiences: *Blind Field Shuttle* (2010) and *Mobility Device* (2013)

Blind Field Shuttle (starts 2010 – many iterations) is a non-visual exercise designed by Papalia centered on dynamics of participation and improvisation. The exercise consists of an (approximately) hour-long walk during which a group of people navigates an urban or rural environment relying on nonvisual cues. The experience starts with Papalia describing the exercise: participants close their eyes, link arms or place their hands on top of the shoulder of the person in front of them, and create a line. After some habituation and check-in processes, such as saying everyone's name out loud to get an idea of who is in the queue and how big the group is, this collective entity starts moving following Carmen's guidance, who leads the way tactilely exploring the space with his white cane. The length of the queue may vary depending on the number of participants, which can reach up to 90 people. If the group becomes too numerous, new challenges arise such as the difficulty communicating an obstacle when the warning must be passed from the beginning of the line up to the end. What may begin as a clear voicing of "water!" or

“post!”, can suffer from many misunderstandings and mispronunciations throughout the line.

This non-visual walking tour is based on a collectively held agreement between the participants and Carmen, built upon trust in each other and upon trust in the navigational and epistemic potential of nonvisual environmental cues. Having described the experience, we can consider the connection between the creative tactics of Access Art enacted in *Blind Field Shuttle* and the principles of Disability Justice. In the epistemic dimension, *Blind Field Shuttle* vindicates the epistemic potential of nonvisual senses insofar as it performs a tactic of willingly ‘disabling the visual’ - e.g., closing our eyes – but not from a deficiency model, but rather from a belief that rescinding visual primacy opens up a new perceptive field of experience that enables ways to navigate space otherwise, to know our environment otherwise. Because of the challenge *Blind Field Shuttle* poses to a deficiency model of disability and blindness, it can be connected to the disability justice principle of wholeness, which states that bodyminds with disabilities are not to be considered as less-than or something to be cured, but rather we should aim to thrive in difference, sustaining the diverse ways of life they open up. It is for this reason that Papalia defends that *Blind Field Shuttle* is an experience of collective learning where participants are offered «an opportunity for the participant to unlearn visual primacy and use their non-visual senses as a primary way of knowing the world» (Papalia, 2010).



Fig. 19 A queue of people holding hands and touching the shoulder of the person in front of them turns a corner of an empty street near a main road in San Francisco, during a *Blind Field Shuttle* walk hosted by the California College of the Arts. The line is led by Papalia, wearing a black fedora and navigating space with a white cane. Photo credit: Jordan Reznick, courtesy of the artist.

In terms of the political dimension of *Blind Field Shuttle*, I want to consider two aspects of the piece that connect with the Disability Justice principle of the leadership of those most impacted. First, Papalia's *Blind Field Shuttle* enacts a reorganization of bodies in public space. The line of people does not navigate the environment guided by goal-oriented movements, for instance going from home to the workplace: the queue serpents in virtue of the improvisation of Papalia, who cocreates the itinerary with many environmental elements – the sunrays' warmth, the sound of water, the texture of the pathway – and mediating surfaces – the white cane's tip, thermal receptors in the skin. The poetic practice of Matthew Rader in *Visual Inspection* (2019) documents his bodily experience of Papalia's social practice piece *Blind Field Shuttle*, narrating how «touch is never innocent» (Rader 2019: 19), by exploring the dimensions of affect, movement and pain that Papalia's piece unearths in a suite of Notes (collected together in different sets of texts by breaks), an Endnote, and a Coda.³ To generate different ways to establish a

³ The collection of poems is the result of the research-creation project *Visual Inspection*, conducted by Rader at the University of British Columbia from 2015 to 2017, which raised the question: «If the page is a field of visual composition in contemporary poetry – and it is such a field- how can we as poets make this

relationship with the text that put our bodies and the sense of touch at the forefront, the Notes experiment with blank spaces, line spacing, margins, continuity, and line breaks, as well as with erasure poetry. These poetic devices enable Rader to create a suite with variations on rhythm, density, and texture and which require the reader to pay attention to notions of space, brightness and fullness that usually remain unnoticeable. They also constitute a challenge for the rhapsodist, who needs to figure out strategies to translate these spatial and tactile dimensions into aural devices, thus constituting a textual analog creative tactic for challenging our sensory distribution in aesthetic perception through a textual medium that redistributes the senses and how we access artistic devices.

In the medium of a shared experience within social practice, *Blind Field Shuttle* generates a space of improvisation reliant on nonvisual cues, which invites participants to be fully attentive to sonic and tactile elements, entering a nonvisual space that usually remains obscured by the primacy of sight. Secondly, inhabiting this nonvisual space as a pleasurable activity and not as an experience of trauma and loss invites us to reconsider how subjects who do not rely on visual cues are usually defined as deficient compared to visual learners. That is, in Papalia's defense of the cognitive value of nonvisual learning, he takes agency and leadership to define himself as a nonvisual learner instead of a Blind person. *Blind Field Shuttle* remarks this linguistic turn, which at the same time affects the artist's own experience of disability. As Papalia argued in an interview with *Field* in 2016, discussing *Blind Field Shuttle*:

I feel like I don't always have to explain what the term nonvisual learner means, or where it comes from; people around me have started adopting this language, and now they will identify me as a nonvisual learner. It's the reality that I want to be living in. I first had to propose it through my practice, but now these identifiers that I've set up for myself have some currency within the community. (Bell, 2016)

As the passage states, there is a creation of desirable realities *in* the creative practice of Access Art, in this case in the design of *Blind Field Shuttle*, which performs a redistribution of the sensible. This is politic insofar it contributes to and affects the shape of a culture and a community. The element of community that is strengthened through the collective responsibility and agreement performed during the exercise connects with the

field available to non-visual learners as a manner that is consistent with our own individual aesthetic preferences? What would we make? » (Rader 2019: 17).

last dimension of the work: the ethical dimension. Using creative tactics consisting of centering collective care and subverting time and space, Papalia makes palpable Disability Justice's principle of interdependence. As mentioned before, the whole improvisational exercise depends on an agreement and trust among the participants – trusting each other and the artist guiding them. This connection is reinforced by the actual contact established touching each other's to keep the line from breaking up. As the shuttle navigates the environment, decisions about where to go to are made allowing pauses, uncertainty and mistakes, that must be maneuvered around adapting to the needs of those constituting the line. In conclusion, *Blind Field Shuttle* relies on creative tactics of disabling the visual in favor of a multisensory experience, and subverting time and space to create a collectively held temporary device that enables us to inhabit a world shaped by Disability Justice's principles of wholeness, leadership of the most impacted, and interdependence. As such, it is an exercise in prefigurative politics where we find ourselves acting 'as if' the reality we inhabit was different, in turn opening up the possibilities of futures which are otherwise, cultivating an imagination that, as Leah Lakshmi puts it, gifts us with what «able-bodied imagination refuses to see» (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018a: 70).

The second work to be discussed is Papalia's collaborative performance *Mobility Device*, developed for the first time in 2013 at the residency at the Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana California, and iterated again in 2015 at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and in 2019 at High Line New York. Like *Blind Field Shuttle*, *Mobility Device* relies on dynamics of improvisation and participation to question the social markers of disability, specifically the white cane as an institutionalized marker of blindness. However, the core mechanism of *Mobility Device* is a mechanism of *replaceability*. In this performance, Papalia navigates an environment, which is usually unknown or little known to the artist, replacing his detection white cane by a marching band. In 2013, Papalia collaborated with the Great Centurion Marching Band from Century High School, while in London he worked with BBC foley artist Alison Craig. Using these sonic devices as an alternative system of navigation, Papalia improvises his way around the environment relying on the musical cues through which his collaborators alert him of obstacles, structures, and other elements in a usually crowded space. Using creative tactics of replaceability and multisensory –mainly sonic- experience, Papalia

triggers epistemic and political reflections. First, *Mobility Device* vindicates the epistemic potential on nonvisual cues, in this case, how music can become a guiding principle for our way to know the world around us. Secondly, it questions the definitiveness of social markers of disability such as the white cane, making palpable how social constructions around blindness and visual impairment *can* indeed be deconstructed and rebuild in pleasurable ways that leave room for the agency of people with disabilities. In other words and to put it bluntly, if we can replace a white cane by a soundscape created by a marching band, anything is possible. As Papalia puts it in the abstract of the work for the 2013 iteration, *Mobility Device* is an exercise of nonvisual imagination that offers «a non-institutional (and non-institutionalizing) temporary solution for the problem that is the white cane» (GCAC, 2013). However, the ethical dimension that connects *Mobility Device* with Disability Justice principles dwells more in the creative process behind the piece rather than in the performance itself.



Fig. 20 Carmen Papalia's 2013 *Mobility Device* walk with Great Centurion Marching Band from Century High School in Santa Ana, California. Walking on a paved crowded street, the marching band surrounds Carmen Papalia, who is immersed in the ensemble, wearing a fedora and walking idly at a carefree pace. Photo credit: Still from the video recording by Grand Central Art Center CSUF.



Fig. 21 Carmen Papalia's September 2019 *Mobility Device* walk with The Hunbry March Band in High Line, New York. Walking on a wide bridge, the 18-musicians band distributed in different rows playing instruments and wearing warm autumn clothing surrounds Carmen Papalia, who leads the way wearing pink short-sleeve shirt, blue jeans, and a fedora with a colorful strip around it. Papalia looks to his left and seems to be walking in a relaxed pace. Photo credit: Carlos David, the High Line.



Fig. 22 Carmen Papalia's October 2021 performance with The Carnival Band in Kitsilano, Vancouver. In the middle of a green park with grass and spring blooming trees, a marching band walks animatedly, distributed in different rows playing instruments and wearing colorful carnivalesque clothing. In the center of the first row, Carmen Papalia leads the way wearing a grey smooth fedora. Photo credit: Sunshine Frère.

Mobility Device opens «the possibility of user-generated, creative process-based systems of access» (GCAC, 2013). The creative process relies on tactics of cocreation and improvisation with the marching band that center collective care and hierarchical decision making. Therefore, it constitutes an exercise of collective access and interdependence where collaboration is fundamentally dreaming together possibilities of the world being built otherwise. The marching bands in 2013 and 2019 performances, or the foley artist in the 2015 iteration, became agents of change that enable Papalia to navigate the environment without relying on visual cues or institutionalizing tools like the detection cane. For the artist, the performance has to do with increasing agency with regards to how to cover one's access needs:

I really was able to choose what I want to use to navigate my surroundings. It's very, like a playful sort of proposal, and also just a very fun project to engage in, having a group of musicians kind of serving as my navigation system. I think that project too is about this support network that coalesces when a group of people kind of like meet around someone's access needs. (Papalia, Abahmed & Etmanski, 2021)

The marching band becomes an extension of the performer, in such a way that the borders that separate bodyminds are blurred in the collaborative effort to move together around the environment. In other words, interdependence is enacted in the most radical way, in an improvised choreography where Papalia obtains support from this collective, musical, and even comical entity that impregnates his aural space. Finally, concerning collective access, *Mobility Device* make manifest the intricate nuances of access needs: as a tailored inventive solution that enables Papalia to navigate a specific space, it is an open challenge to one-size-fits-all policies of access: that is, *Mobility Device* has no intention of institutionalization whatsoever, it is clearly impossible for it to become a standard measure of access. Appealing to a witty exaggeration, and utterly campy, the performance aims to remain as a (repeatable) exception. And it is in virtue of this exceptionality that it invites reflections on the violence of standardization of disabled experiences, and the assumptions made when designing standard access, assumptions that Disability Justice defies at its core.

4. (Un)invited guests: collective institutional critique in *The Touchy Subject* (2013) and *A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery* (2015)

The Touchy Subject (2013) is a non-visual exercise designed by Papalia in partnership with Georgia Krantz and the Mind's Eye program at the New York Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2013. The project had two stages: first, a staff training led by Papalia on "haptic criticism" (Papalia, 2013e) to teach staff members descriptive terminology that was not dependent on the visual; and second, a public experience which consisted of one-on-one touch tours that embraced both items of the collection and architectural elements of Frank Lloyd Wright's building. After the experience, two chronicles were published in the Guggenheim's website. The first was a general review stating how «without the use of sight ... the Guggenheim took on dimensions that educators had never before imagined» (Guggenheim, 2013). The seemingly abstract statements point at the ways in which able-bodied imagination bars us from exploring nonvisual dimensions of the environment, a barrier that is even more emphasized in museum spaces and galleries.

The main limitation posed by able-bodied imagination in *The Touchy Subject* was the lack of hermeneutical resources when confronted with a tactile encounter with a work of art. As Georgina Kleege has noted, as a visual culture we are immersed in a haptic amnesia so that when we offer touch tours for everybody and «invite people to touch art, [because] they do not know what they are supposed to be doing, and that includes both blind and sighted people» (Crochet, Papalia, Mashburn & Kleege, 2022). This is the reason why a haptic criticism training was necessary before performing the tactile tours themselves.



Fig. 23 Educators Lara Schweller and Ellen Edelman stand in a room with landscape paintings at the Guggenheim Museum. With their eyes closed and their arms up, they reach with their hand open towards the ceiling, during the Museum Educator Training for *The Touchy Subject* by Carmen Papalia (November 12, 2013). Photo credit: Filip Wolak, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

The tactics enacted in this performative device become more evident if we consider the more detailed account of *The Touchy Subject* published by Guggenheim's educator Georgia Krantz, who coordinated *The Mind's Eye* program that hosted Papalia. Krantz described Papalia's project as

a phenomenological investigation that considers both the body and consciousness as catalysts for heightened modes of experience, perception, and cognition ... to sensitize people to the power of perception and its potential for reshaping and enhancing one's relationship to the world. (Krantz, 2014)

According to the educator, the experience of the touch tours triggered «an acute awareness of the reliance on sight, as well as the awakening of other senses when the use of one's eyes was not an option» (Krantz, 2014). In contrast with touch tours that limit themselves to brief haptic explorations of selected works from the collection, or even replicas – an issue highly criticized by Georgina Kleege, see below – the Guggenheim tours embraced the tactile and sonic intensity of the building itself: «its changing natural light, the incline of the ramp, shifting architectural soundscapes» (Krantz, 2014) suddenly

were activated and became salient focal points of the itinerary, on a par with sculptures and artworks on display. Krantz remarks point towards three tactics put in place by Papalia for this piece: first, a disabling of the visual as a generative opportunity and possibility for nonvisual learning; second, a subversion of time and space in the museum; and third, the design of an experience centered on gentleness and pause. The first corresponds to an epistemological pulsion that defends nonvisual knowledge as valuable and pleasurable, whereas the second moves toward a political gesture that reorganizes the bodies in the museum. As Georgina Kleege argues, touch is fundamentally disruptive for the temporal and spatial dynamics of museum spaces, as she puts it:

One of the things I realized in my work around aesthetic touch is that once you bring touch into the art space it changes everything. It changes time and space. Because touch takes time. To touch, to get the most out of a tactile experience of art, you don't just poke it and move on. You have to engage with it over time. And if you think of the typical art museum where people spend a minimal number of seconds in front of each artwork and the movement of bodies through space is all predicated on that very small amount of time... If you're going to invite people to touch artwork, you are going to have to change your expectations about how much time it takes. It also changes spatial arrangements. Having an artwork that is meant to be touched up against the wall is not going to be optimal. You need to move it out into the center of the gallery space, so people can get at it from multiple sides. (Crochet, Papalia, Mashburn & Kleege, 2022)

As the passage narrates, the tactile structure of *The Touchy Subject* demanded a transformation of the time and space of the museum, in such a reorganizing way that it opened a space of resistance. This opening is connected to Disability Justice principles of collective access and anti-capitalism, because it entails structuring a space and time where access needs can be covered, where bodies do not comply with the fast paced and with the normative bodily movements that are usually disciplining us in museum spaces, and simultaneously it opens up a spacetime where the capitalist time distributed and dictated by goals of consumerism and productivity is suspended. This altered temporal profile is connected to the ethical dimension of *The Touchy Subject*. As Kleege argues, touch needs time. For this reason, the performance of one-on-one tours in the New York Guggenheim that appreciate the aesthetic touch of the elements, the artworks, the changes of warmth depending on the light bathing the space, the temperature of the surfaces and the friction of the soles of our feet against the floor requires a space-time built around pause and gentleness. Gentleness is a notion that Papalia would later develop in collaboration with Rebel Fayola Rose, who defines it in connection to Disability Justice's principle of

sustainability. To make disabled existence sustainable, there is a need to fight urgency with gentleness. As Fayola Rose puts it

replace urgency with gentleness. That's how I think about sustainability: it's gentle. Gentleness slows down for the interpreter. Gentleness notices pressure and deescalates it. Gentleness takes the time to build relationships and allies across difference. (Rose, 2022)

Nevertheless, in *The Touchy Subject*, gentleness remains in the background – it will occupy a more central position in later works by Papalia where community is centered. However, in the one-on-one tours we can find an incipient interest in establishing caring relationships where access is made together as a collectively held agreement. Still, I place *The Touchy Subject* in the Borderlands Period because Papalia remains the author, designer and educator of the piece. As Krantz notes, the learning is collective insofar «the real learning experience happened during the interactions with the visitors» who spoke of «mobilized states of attention and insight ... opportunity and possibility» (Krantz, 2014). But this collective learning experience is only possible when facilitated and preceded by Papalia's training



Fig. 24 Carmen Papalia stands with his eyes closed, wearing a fedora and holding his customized black cane in the ground level of the Guggenheim's rotunda, during his Museum Educator Training for *The Touchy Subject* (November 12, 2013). Photo credit: Filip Wolak, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.



Fig. 25 Guggenheim educator Jen Oleniczak leads a visitor to caress a circular portal that connects two rooms of the museum. The visitor is bending forward and extending her arms open to reach both sides of the circle and trace its curve, during *The Touchy Subject: A Sensory Tour Developed by Carmen Papalia* (November 16, 2013). Photo credit: Filip Wolak, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

In this sense, *The Touchy Subject* can be included under what Whitney Mashburn categorizes as pieces where Papalia enacts Andrea Fraser’s logic of operating from within the institution, where critique «could only have emerged within, and like all art, can only function within the institution of art» (Fraser, 2011: 414). As Mashburn assesses

Papalia challenges and critiques these very ‘modes of perception’ that Fraser notes [as internalized and embodied institutionalized modes]. Through the conceptual rigor of his practice and the strategic structure of his interventions, he causes these living beings to rethink their modes of perceiving art (i.e. access and multi-sensorial engagement, and ... tactile access to art within the white cube). He uses the framing of the institution to ask these questions of perception, while at the same time critiquing the perceptions within the institution. (Mashburn, 2016: 37)

For our purposes, it is worth noting that this disruption of the institutionalized modes of perception entails a political redistribution of sensible bodies in space and time in such a way that we can speak of an opening of a space of resistance. This space (and time) of resistance is characterized, in *The Touchy Subject*, as a space of interdependence

and collective access, dictated by principles of gentleness that are the opposite counterparts of the productivity urgent mandates of capitalistic space-time or dynamics. Therefore, *The Touchy Subject* centers the tactile dimensions of aesthetic experience as a mechanisms of resistance and reorganization, because it triggers a ‘misuse’ and displacement of sensory distribution and schemas – what Fraser calls internalized institutional modes of perception-, thus forcing us to renegotiate our spatial relationships between our body, the surroundings, and human and non-human others, that is, the relationship between guide and guided, and with artworks and architectonic features. Against modes of perception that, as Carmen Papalia puts it, act in a way that «museums disable me as a viewer» (Papalia 2014b); through the reorganizational tactile-centered strategies like the ones examined, Papalia's aesthetic practices become a site for sensory redistribution and exploration that challenges able-bodied imagination.

In contrast with *The Touchy Subject*, which we can understand as an institutional critique that emerges out of an invited collaboration between the institution itself and the artist, *The New Access Consortium Presents: A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery* is an uninvited institutional critique that resulted in an intervention and exhibition curated by Papalia with Gallery Gachet and the Contemporary Art Gallery (Vancouver). For our purposes, the exhibition and the parallel programming that accompanied it – with a symposium entitled *For a New Accessibility* and a series of workshops – marks a shifting point in the trajectory of the artist mainly concerning the guiding question of his practice and the creative tactics employed in the processes. If in the Cane-centered Period we can identify a core concern about self-advocacy and identity, from the *Audit* onwards there emerges a concern for building a new reality, for dreaming of disabled futures. Métis artist and University of Regina Visual Arts professor David Garneau expresses it poignantly with his declaration after attending to the exhibition and activities at Gallery Gachet: «What I witnessed during these three days renewed my faith in the power of art to build and bridge communities, and to subtly reshape the world» (Garneau, 2016).

The exhibition at Gallery Gachet was the result of a three-month process where Papalia had weekly meetings with Arlene Bowman, aly de la cruz yip, romham pádraig gallacher, Taryn Goodwin, Jotika, and Myah Catherine Rose Wallace to discuss the different dimensions that made the Vancouver Art Gallery inaccessible for many

communities. On this occasion, collective access, collective liberation and intersectionality can be set as the central Disability Justice principles, since the tactics were directed by a common goal towards self-liberation from the multiple oppressions enacted by the institutional authority of the VAG on bodies which are intersected by many identities – queer, trans, disabled, black and indigenous people of color. These bodies were disabled in a museum shaped by able-bodied imagination, and the aim of the audit was to imagine conditions where the access needs of these bodyminds could be met, in such a way that there was room for agency and pleasure.



Fig. 26 General view of Gallery Gachet’s exhibition *A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery*. On the left wall, some placards with sections of Papalia’s Open Access manifesto rest on the floor and are hung on the walls. A wheelchair user reads the wall with the “I want” statements developed by the participants of the project. A couple of visitors read a rewriting of a VAG wall text printed on a fabric banner that hangs from the ceiling with red threads. (November 7, 2015). Photo credit: Sylwia Kisynska, Gallery Gachet.



Fig. 27 Carmen Papalia and Kristin Rochelle Lantz stand in front of a white wall of Gallery Gachet, with placards that read “Open Access” and contain different anarchist symbols. The placards seem to be painted with thick black and red paint and markers. (November 7, 2015) Photo credit: Sylwia Kisynska, Gallery Gachet.

In Garneau’s chronicle it becomes palpable that in the Audit, Papalia already relinquished from the position of the author or the educator. Rather, he turns into a medium or facilitator that activates a community of what he calls ‘co-conspirators’. In this case, it was a preexisting community: the artists of the area of Gallery Gachet, which is located in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Although Papalia’s Open Access tenets were used as the framework of the community meetings, the main outcome of the audit was the process itself: with the community in Gallery Gachet, Papalia developed «a working methodology for assessing the state of institutional access and publicness» (Papalia, 2015). The public presentation of the process took the form of an exhibition at Gallery Gachet, which opened on Saturday, November 7, 2015, and ran until December 13. The exhibition drew on aesthetics of protest, barricades, and demonstrations, gathering documentation and archival elements, and developing precarious installations that denounced misrepresentations of capitalist and colonial agendas and discipline structures in the VAG. In front of these protests, the self-appointed New Access Consortium proposed a series of claims beginning with “I WANT” expressing their access

thinking and reflection, but also in “remarkable aesthetic experiences”. Not only did the collective perform an institutional critique, but also it embraced accessibility as a creative medium and practice centered around a solidarity among bodyminds that had been historically marginalized or barred from museum spaces and galleries. The exhibition space became a collectively held space and time where each member of the community was welcomed in their wholeness, leaving no part of their intersectional identity behind – far from the disciplining of the VAG that forced them to choose between masking or marginalization. Therefore, the different outcomes of the audit of the VAG staged in Gallery Gachet can be summarized as three: an epistemic outcome in the form of the working methodology that was developed from the framework of Open Access; a political result of «disabling social, cultural and political conditions that obstruct agency» (Papalia, 2015) in the VAG by creating a space of prefigurative politics where bodyminds could act otherwise; and finally an ethical outcome as the creation of a community centered on collective access and liberation that could dream of a future built around mutual aid and building capacity for support together in solidarity.

5. From guest collective to conspicuous community: *Provisional Structures 1* (2021) and *Provisional Structures 2* (2022)

The most recent project to be analyzed here is Papalia’s long-term collaboration with architect Michael Lis and with a growing community of co-conspirators, which so far has had two institutional scenarios: *Provisional Structures: Carmen Papalia with VoVo and jes sachse*, at the McKenzie Gallery (July 7, 2021 – October 17, 2021); and *Provisional Structures: Carmen Papalia with co-conspirators*, at the Vancouver Art Gallery (December 3, 2022 – April 16, 2023). I will present the agents and elements of each of these iterations and proceed to analyse the common factors that enable us to speak of a processual continuity that brings together both exhibitions under a sole project. The first iteration was materialized in summer 2021, when the McKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, SK, hosted the exhibition *Provisional Structures: Carmen Papalia with VoVo and jes sachse*, curated by Nicolle Nugent and realized in collaboration with Vancouver-based architectural designer Michael Lis, who has been cocreating with Papalia since 2019.



Fig. 29 Carmen Papalia sits on a couch smiling and wearing a fedora. He is reaching out with his arms to touch a small-scale physical model of the architectural design of *Provisional Structures 1*, tracing the ramp around the dome with his fingertips. Photo credit: Goodweather Canada.

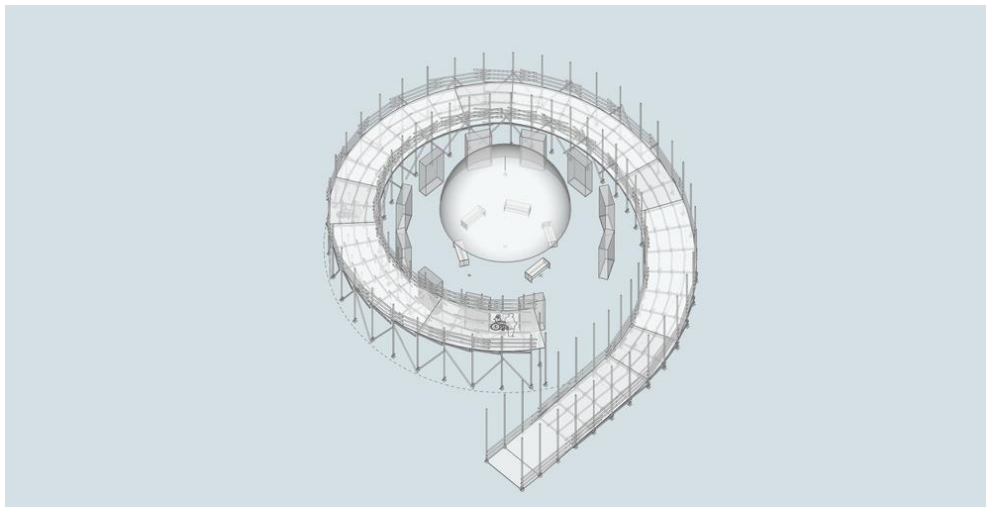


Fig. 30 A 3D generated model shows the structure of *Provisional Structures 1*: The central dome has some sitting space behind and is surrounded by the scaffolding ramp that circles around it uphill, leading to a cul-de-sac at the top of it that comes full-circle and enables the visitor to do a 360° tour around the dome. Photo credit: Goodweather Canada.

The exhibition was accompanied by a public program and the publication of an accessibility statement for the gallery developed after trainings with Papalia, who commented on how the show was just a manifestation of an ongoing long-term process he had started with the McKenzie four years before, which entailed a reciprocal commitment to unlearn ableist, colonial biases. Papalia emphasizes the importance this long-term commitment had for the project:

I think my collaboration with the McKenzie has been just one of the more ideal experiences and being called into work with an institution around accessibility since my approach to accessibility and just the way I understand it is more of an ongoing process, to have ongoing relationships with communities, and not the checklist, which is insufficient. It's more about responding to the needs in the room at any given time, questioning who's in the room and who's not, and what the social, cultural and political conditions are that are either supporting people to have agency or alienating them. The McKenzie was a great opportunity to not just jump in and work with staff ... Over the last few years we've really been building on this conversation about accessibility, leading to this show, as well as the accessibility statement. (Papalia, Cachia & Nugent, 2021)

As the passage notes, the installation and collaboration with the McKenzie enabled the artist to develop a relationship with the staff and the communities that are part of the gallery's environment. It is out of these relationships that an accessibility statement considering the access needs of those involved could be developed – always considering that this statement was never meant to be a final document, but rather a provisional draft susceptible to modifications in virtue of the ongoing temporary negotiation that access is. In what follows, I will introduce the visual description of the show and discuss how it bears witness to a shift in Papalia's practice from institutional critique to dreaming disabled futures. Moreover, Provisional Structures performs the building of a community of artists that Papalia brings into institutional spaces as co-conspirators through what I call 'foot in the door' creative tactics.

A scaffold ramp occupies the majority of the gallery's largest exhibition space, winding in a spiral shape towards the ceiling. You're asked to move up a wooden ramp, supported by steel scaffolding, and experience the shape with your body. From the ceiling hangs a sound reducing felt lined dome that appears to be floating over top of the entire structure. Under the ascending ramp is a hallway and a red string connects you from didactic panels to the right of the entrance and leads you into the center of the structure. Upon arriving at the center of the installation, you'll find yourself surrounded by eleven freestanding mirrored columns. In the center of the columns just under 200 sandbags are assembled into curved benches, for you to rest and gather, each printed with the words 'OPEN ACCESS'. While seated on the sandbag benches, you can listen to an audio piece about trauma informed care and communities by artist VoVo. This recording was a keynote

presentation that Vo gave for the Portland Disability Justice Collective online conference in 2020. The space is lit fairly dramatically with cool fluorescent lighting around the outer edges of the gallery ceiling, and then it's dimmed closer to the center of the sound dome. Running up the wall inside the left of the gallery entrance is an artwork by artist jes sachse titled *take all the time you need*. Over 1300 small brass plated metal plaques each reading “I need a minute” are installed in columns 10 feet high and five feet wide, resembling a donor wall. There is an old warm wooden bench in front of the piece, a place to sit and consider accessibility, as a long unending process, one in which the time required is expressed by the person who needs support. (Papalia, Cachia & Nugent, 2021)



Fig. 31 General view of the installation of *Provisional Structures: Carmen Papalia with Vo Vo and jes sachse* at The MacKenzie Art Gallery. Some sandbags are arranged in a circle behind the dome, a woman is sitting on top of one of them talking to a wheelchair user. The sitting space is surrounded by a circle of mirrors and, behind them, the scaffolding ramp rotunda (July 2021). Photo credit: Don Hall, MacKenzie Art Gallery.

As described in the passage above, the two coconspirators of this installment were jes sachse and Vo Vo. First, jes sachse’s piece *take all the time you need* resorts to a creative strategy of repetition and of appropriating the imagery of donor walls in order to subvert the time profile that governs bodies in museum spaces. As Kleege points out, museum spaces demand from us to spend the least amount of time possible in front of each artwork. In sharp contrast, sachse invites visitors to “take time” and to consider this time as a precious resource when building capacity for care and support with others. Secondly, the exhibition featured audio recordings of Vo Vo’s voice reflecting on trauma-informed care and access. For Vo Vo, a trauma informed lens is

the assumption that trauma is everywhere, that ableism and trauma intersect in almost every system that we exist in, what the automatic responses can look like, and that anything can be a trigger. So if we recognize that, then we can start to validate and acknowledge people's trauma responses even if they look a certain way and we start to understand why people are responding to threat or feeling unsafe in a number of different ways ... All of these are intrinsically linked; Trauma-informed care, anti-racism, disability justice, anti-capitalism, abolition and harm reduction. And anti-racism includes dismantling and ending anti-blackness and post-colonial and decolonizing strategies. (Vo Vo, 2021: 3)

For trauma-informed care in a museum space, we must acknowledge different triggers concerning how we interact with each other both inside and outside the exhibition. Some of these triggers include relational triggers, such as «resources being taken away, access being denied, lack of follow through, lack of response, invasive questions, lack of privacy or confidentiality, touching without consent» (Vo Vo, 2021: 3) and environmental or physical triggers like the presence of «authority figures or authoritarianism, uniforms, atmosphere of a space, a tone, dominant culture norms, indicators of whiteness, ableism or the patriarchy» (Vo Vo, 2021: 3). In contrast with retraumatizing institutionalized exhibition spaces, *Provisional Structures* aimed to be a gathering space of comfort and care. The mirrors arranged in a circle around the seating area are an allegory for reflection and invite visitors to confront their own privileges and the shared responsibilities we all have towards one another, creating an environment for acknowledging our role as members of a bigger community. The curatorial statement insists on the idea of interdependence as the key concept of the exhibition, and it argues that the usage of scaffolding is a material tactic to convey the idea of building a more solid future based on the grounds of Disability Justice, a disabled future of collective access:

Provisional Structures encourages us to explore the possibilities that can emerge when we think about a *radically interdependent culture*. Audiences will be presented with the opportunity to build on their own embodied experiences and understanding of Disability Justice, a movement focusing on the need to build capacity within a community for care, without reliance on institutions ... Scaffolding is normally the first step in the construction of strong foundations; in this case, it supports *the transformative pursuit of equity and accessibility*, basic work that organizations must now undertake. (Nugent, 2021, my emphasis)

Therefore, the installation of *Provisional Structures* at the MacKenzie was a punctual materialization of an ongoing, never-ending practice of access and care that requires a long-term commitment from both ends: the community and the institution.

Following Papalia's framework for Open Access, the MacKenzie Art Gallery expressed their engagement beyond the exhibition, considering their action towards more accessible museum spaces as a basic and urgent work for institutions.

The second installment of *Provisional Structures* was staged at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 2022, in an exhibition entitled *Provisional Structures: Carmen Papalia with co-conspirators* (December 3, 2022 – April 16, 2023), curated by Mandy Ginson, Stephanie Bokenfohr and Papalia himself. On this occasion, the co-conspirators included Disability Justice Dreaming founder Rebel Fayola Rose, Sharona Franklin, Catherine Frazee and Gabrielle Peters from the Disability Filibuster Against Bill C-7, Heather Kai Smith, and the instigators of The Curiosity Paradox Grant Miller and Jonathan Paradox Lee. At the core of Papalia's community building is a demand of mutual aid for institutions. Bringing in a community of disability artist into a relationship network with museum institutions has the potential to unearth and make palpable the ways in which these institutions are currently unable to *hold* Disability Culture. For *Provisional Structures*, Papalia embraced accessibility as a creative medium and practice, which was the generative matrix to establish a relationship with his co-conspirators, and at the same time to question how the Vancouver Art Gallery could go beyond accommodating these artists, but rather generating a safe, affirming, and supportive context that can hold them with care.

This community of artists and activists was gathered around *Provisional Structure 2*, created with architectural designer Michael Lis. The gathering space consists of a black, tent-like structure with an oculus at the top of the structure. From the oculus, six black balloons emerge as a remembrance of daily victims of harm reduction and overdose in British Columbia. Surrounding and holding the tent, there is a wooden scaffolding resembling of theatrical back of house areas. The exhibition text emphasizes how the material arrangements center a notion of provisionality:

Suspension cables run from the wood scaffolds to an oculus in the roof of the tented room, to suggest that the structure has nimbly dropped into place, and can consequently can be pulled up and disassembled. The tent form is constructed from custom-made acoustic panels covered in black fabric, to create a dark space where sound is the primary mode of perception, referencing Papalia's privileging of the non-visual senses within his own life. (VAG, 2022b)



Fig. 32 Entrance to the installation of *Provisional Structures 2* at The Vancouver Art Gallery. A big scaffolding structure surrounds a portal to a circular sitting space inside a black fabric tent. (2022). Photo credit: Vancouver Art Gallery.



Fig. 33 Inside space of the installation of *Provisional Structures 2* at The Vancouver Art Gallery. Piles of sandbags are arranged in a circle inside the black tent. (2022). Photo credit: Vancouver Art Gallery.

Inside of the tent, there is a seating space made of sandbags with the words ‘OPEN ACCESS’ printed on them, arranged to form a circle. This seating space invites visitors to take time to listen to a video monitor screening the recording of the virtual event Disability Filibuster Against Bill C-7. Bill C-7 is the medical assistance and dying act, and as Papalia explains, the Filibuster were twenty-four-hour streams made anti this legislation:

this legislation for medical assistance in dying⁴ brought in guidelines so that anyone with a disability diagnosis could qualify for be recommended medical assistance and dying to alleviate their condition or provide them relief. This was a really devastating for many people but there was just this amazing moment of solidarity and this movement in opposition to this bill ... And there was a statement by Gabrielle read on that stream expressing that the medical system is harmful to us as disabled people and it wants to erase us and it wants to end our lives as a way to provide care or some compassion to us, which is just a such a backwards idea. I really resonated with that idea that the medical system is harmful. (Papalia, Cachia & Nugent, 2021)

⁴ The disposability of disabled bodyminds has been discussed further concerning MAiD and PAS in the Disability Justice principle of Anti-capitalism’s origins in the movement, in Chapter III (211).

The introduction of the Disability Filibuster highlights the justice-oriented lens of Papalia's accessibility practices and connects this iteration of Provisional Structures with the trauma-informed care approach adopted in the McKenzie installation. Care is centered by making accessibility a built-in principle of the whole exhibition instead of an afterthought. For instance, entering the gallery, visitors are welcomed by an audio introduction of the installation, written and recorded by Papalia himself; as well as available access devices like «a wheelchair, a cane, noise-canceling headphones, and a navigational walking stick» (Kong, 2023). These measures seek to address the visitors' access needs, making *Provisional Structures* a space of gentleness and comfort where one is welcomed without leaving any part of themselves behind, in their wholeness.

The site-specific installation at Vancouver was accompanied by a dedicated programming space with a resource library. In this space, one can find a small seating area also made of sandbags, with heating pads available. On top of the seating area there hangs a white parachute printed with the statement “Open Access is a Temporary, Collectively Held Space”, a phrase extracted from Papalia's Open Access tenets. This piece was co-created by Papalia and artist Heather Kai Smith, as part of the material presented at the Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff, Alberta, in 2019. Papalia has also used this parachute in collective trainings at the arts center BAK basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht, during his actions ‘Open Access Organizing Accessibility from the Grassroots’ in the *Trainings for the Not-Yet* series in October 2019. Although in *Provisional Structures* it remains static, the parachute is activated when a group of people hold it together and put it in motion, thus manifesting how movement can be created through interdependence and collaboration. In the programming space, monitors screen two videos of the conference *As We Are: Disability Justice and Community Care Conference*, organized by Rebel Fayola Rose in 2020: *DeafBlind Cultures*, by artist and accessibility worker Korian “Koko” Thomas; and *Black Lives Matter Memorial Garden*, by queer Black writer Galadriel Mozee, on their experience working in a community garden. Apart from these videos, Rose led a series of Disability Justice Dreaming Sessions with local community members in the Vancouver area, which will be discussed when his practice is presented below. Finally, the Curiosity Paradox's contribution consists of a reprinting of their 2022 text *Question Access* in small postcards that visitors can take. In the text, which was discussed in this dissertation concerning Disability Justice's principle of Collective

Access, the Curiosity Paradox compares and contrasts two lenses for accessibility: standard access, which consists of compliance with a set of checkpoints; and Access Art, which understands access as an ongoing process of negotiation, improvisation, and finding creative solutions to cover the access needs of those who are present. The cards are placed inside envelopes imprinted with Risograph printings of vegetal shadows from the artist's garden studio, remembrances of the legacy of past disability activists. The artists claim that «the cards are imagined as a tool for Disabled people to question how our existence actively transforms and contributes to the spaces we inhabit» (VAG, 2022b).

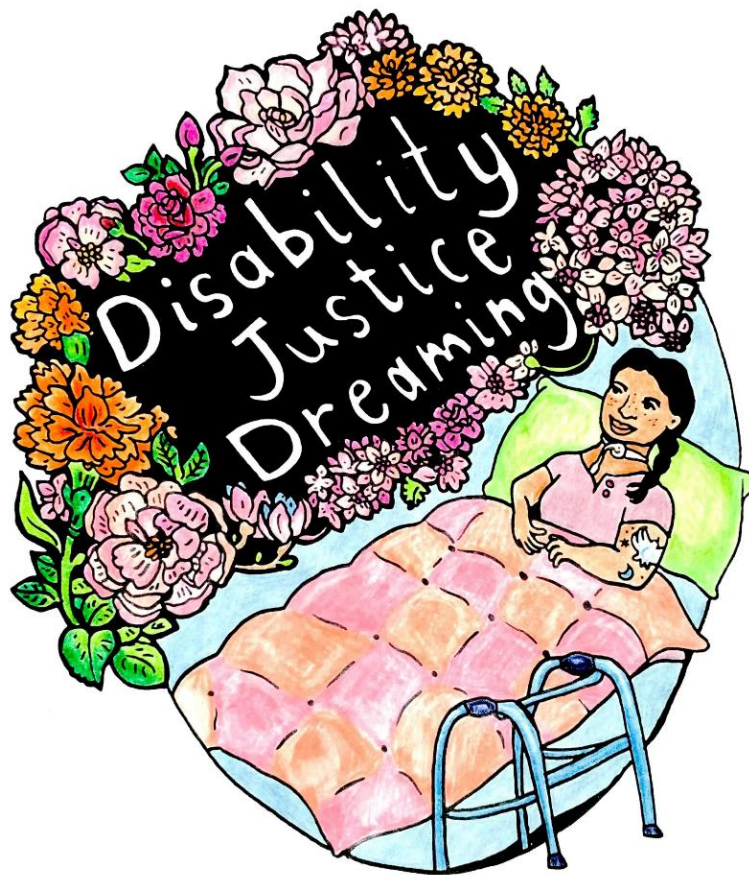


Fig. 34 «A circular illustration, in colour, depicting person is laying in a bed, a walker is beside their bed. Person has dark hair in braids on either side, freckles and is smiling, looking upwards. Person is looking up to a flower burst cloud that reads “Disability Justice Dreaming” » (Gallery Gachet, 2023). Photo credit: Rebel Fayola Rose.

Finally, the installation extends beyond the walls of the temporary exhibition rooms, colonizing the windows of the Vancouver Art Gallery with 840 black balloons that can be seen from the exterior of the gallery on Georgia Street (Kong, 2023). These balloons correspond to the number of people expected to die from overdose during the four-month period of the exhibition, according to statistics. The shocking invasion of the public landscape invites reflections on harm reduction and collective care in a moment of drug use crisis in the Vancouver Area.

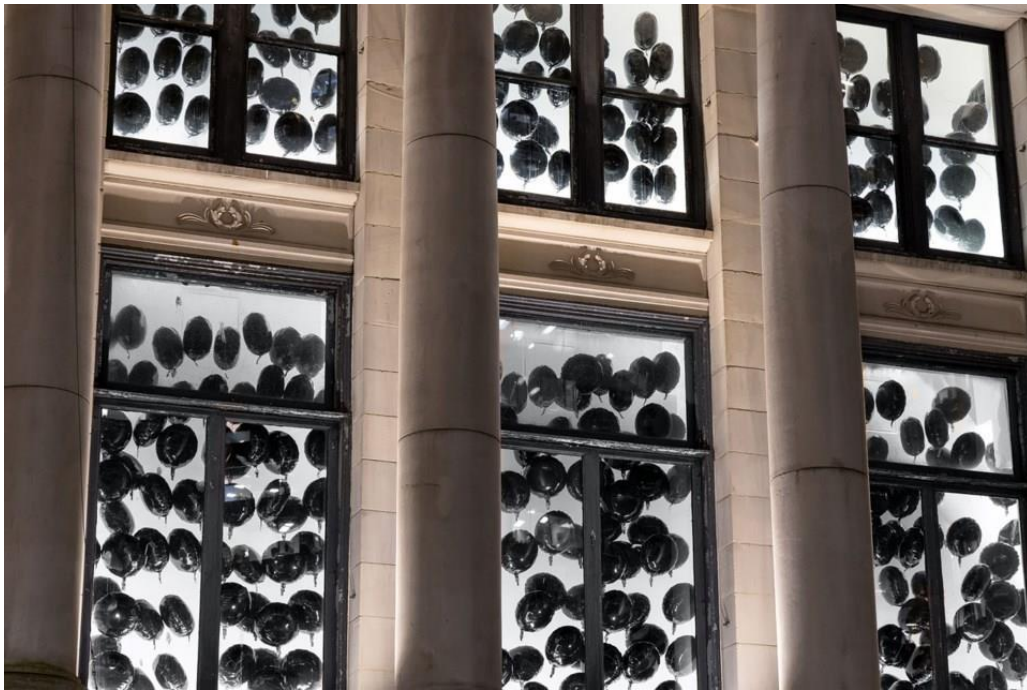


Fig. 35 Outside view at night of the Vancouver Art Gallery – through the spotlight illuminated windows, there are numerous black balloons floating inside that strikingly contrast with the white inside walls. The balloons were an extension of the installation of *Provisional Structures 2*. Photo credit: Vancouver Art Gallery.

Considering that both iterations of *Provisional Structures* overlapped in time due to the long-term processes of production, realization, and exhibition they entailed, I will analyze together the creative tactics deployed by Papalia in both these projects. I argue that *Provisional Structures* belongs to a distinguishable stage of the artist's practice we could call the Architectural Period, which is characterized by a focus on changing infrastructures, building communities of conspirators, and dreaming of disabled futures. If the guiding concern of the Cane-centered period was self-advocacy, and mutual learning was at the heart of the Borderlands period, this third interval revolves around the

question “What is to remain?”. This concern materializes in provisional installments that borrow strategies from the field of architecture, like scaffolding and falsework – creative tactics heavily inspired by the collaboration with Michael Lis since 2019. In *Provisional Structures*, Papalia takes to a radical extreme the ethical theme of how to build collective responsibility around care and access needs, creating in the present a dreamlike scenario of what a disability-informed gentle spacetime would be. The configuration of gathering spaces to reflect around care and trauma express through creative tactics the disability justice principles of cross-movement organizing (bringing together liberatory movements against whiteness, ableism, and the patriarchy in the exhibition space), cross-disability solidarity (considering the needs of a diversity of experiences of disability and building capacity for mutual aid around them), and radical interdependence.

The epistemic dimension remains present but seems to fade in the background. The multisensory experience allowed by the installation continues to invite visitors into nonvisual spaces that cultivate the rest of the senses. But rather than following a didactic impulse to ‘educate’ able-bodied and able-minded visitors, Papalia’s practice in the Architectural Period seems to depart from an assumption that Disability Culture is epistemically valuable and gives way to more openly political themes. For this reason, the predominant creative practice continues to disable the visual and center pleasurable nonvisual access focusing on touch, but through the reorganization of bodies in the gallery space. Disability principles of anti-capitalism and collective liberation are staged in *Provisional Structures* by means of creative tactics that displace the hegemonic disciplined shaping of bodies in the museum. The installations require a sensorimotor and kinesthetic engagement built on notions of care and gentleness that invite a different kind of movement and a paused rhythm that frees bodyminds from the capitalistic urge for productivity and fastness; while the provisionality of the structure challenges ideas of conservation, production and accumulation of wealth in favor of living systems that leave a trace even after being dismantled.

Still within the political dimension of artistic practices that inform the Architectural Period, the most notable shift in this last period is how Papalia embodies cross-disability solidarity and the leadership of those most impacted Disability Justice principles mainly through a creative tactic I denominate the “foot in the door” strategy.

In what may appear as a contradiction, after making his way into institutional settings and gaining a recognition in the artworld, Papalia has progressively renounced his role as an author by prioritizing collective works. His practice has become increasingly communitarian, and in his most recent works he takes advantage of getting his foot in the door of museum spaces as a creative strategy to build in a space of resistance and collective advocacy where he brings a whole lot of co-conspirators and demands an agreement between the artists and the institution stating their desires, expectations and access needs to produce the work. Finally, it is worth remarking that this emphasis on collective advocacy, which contrasts with his first experiments on self-advocacy as a nonvisual learner, coincide with the creation Papalia's initiative the Open Access Foundation for Arts and Culture (OAFAC), a Disability Justice cultural organization that centers collective care and interdependence in Disability Arts. OAFAC aims to

set a new cultural standard for accessibility by nurturing creative and justice-oriented accessibility practices that respond to the desires of the most impacted among us ... through disability-led trainings, curation, public engagements, supporting artistic development, exhibitions, performances, educational campaigns, site-specific project development, and cultural competency consultation. (OAFAC, 2021)

Therefore, the boundaries between Papalia's activism and creative practice become more and more blurry – he is not only an artist but a key agent in the community of Access Art, where he brings in both creative strategies that inspire others' practice, but also a sense of togetherness and collective care vital to sustain a long-term Disability Culture. As an educator, activist and artist, Papalia has built capacity for those underrepresented in Disability Arts to advocate for themselves and participate professionally in a visual culture built on ableist grounds. Paradigmatic examples of his impact as a mentor and co-creator is his recent collaboration with Colin von Uchelen, *Project Fire Flower*.

6. Firing up co-conspirators: centering the process in Papalia and van Uchelen's Project Fire Flower (2019-2021)

Collin van Uchelen, PhD, is a Vancouver-based artist and Community Psychology consultant. He has been a pioneer in creating community in collective homes in the Vancouver area, as the founder of Vancouver's Collective House Network in 2007 and

facilitator of *The Heart Of Belonging Workshops: Creating & Sustaining A Sense of Community In Our Lives* between 2012 and 2017. In 2016, he was awarded the Governor General of Canada Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers for his task empowering citizens and promoting community bonds in British Columbia. Moreover, Van Uchelen holds a PhD in community psychology by the University of Illinois, and he has published numerous scholarly papers on the relationship between the sense of community and empowerment. When he was twenty, van Uchelen was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa (RP), which causes gradual sight loss. Slowly, he became concerned about the effect that engaging with his community through nonvisual senses might have on his feeling of connection. He notes that becoming legally blind

really disconnects me from so much of what's around me... When you lose your eyesight, you lose a lot of opportunity for engagement and connection. The core issue for me is that my sight loss has really required me to make extra effort to maintain connection. (van Uchelen in Sligl, 2014)

However, this “extra effort” to connect was also an opportunity to create new ways to access his community, inviting him to think of nonvisual modes of interdependence, recognition, and bonding. Retinitis pigmentosa slowly transformed van Uchelen's field of sight into tunnel vision, although he could still see high contrast forms, such as fireworks: «It doesn't get any better than fireworks for me – they're high contrast, bright, moving and flashing. That's how to get my attention» (van Uchelen in Sligl, 2014). Van Uchelen's interest in fireworks was highly influenced by his experiences at the Celebration of Light, a fireworks festival that takes place every year at English Bay, Vancouver. It was the preoccupation about not being able to take part in the Celebration of Light as a community event that led van Uchelen to a process of artistic research exploring how to make fireworks accessible for nonvisual learners.

Although he did not identify as an artist at that time, we can trace back van Uchelen's practice in creative access to 2014, when he teamed up with Vocal Eye Descriptive Arts Society of Canada Director, Steph Kirkland, to develop a tactile technique for describing firework displays to nonvisual learners. The idea of translating fireworks into nonvisual forms of access had sparked after attending a firework display at English Bay beach, where he was invited to sit in the production area: there, technical

director of Pyros, Maude Furtado, sat next to him and began to carefully describe the display:

she started spontaneously describing the different effects. And she would say “this is a chrystanemum, this is a spherical effect and this particular color is very difficult to get, because the ___ family kept secrets of how to make fireworks burn blue, and this particular tint was from Italy.” So she went through describing one effect to another, and giving me some details and some background information, and it was amazing because it was like having my own describer, and *technical* describer, because she was giving me this details about how things are actually constructed and made. (Van Uchelen, 2021b, 9:03)

It was after this instance of access intimacy, which originated out of an understanding of what kind of information could be of Collin’s interest rather than a technical proficiency about visual descriptions, that van Uchelen teamed up with Kirkland. It is worth noting that *a priori* VocalEye tends to follow the motto of “say what you see” rather than bet on more creative visual descriptions, a trend vindicated for instance by Georgina Kleege, Carmen Papalia, and captioner Cheryl Greene. The collaboration between van Uchelen and Kirkland originated the technique *Fingerworks for Fireworks*, which consisted of conveying the movement of fireworks by tracing their shapes and rhythm onto the backs of viewers during the Celebration of Light. The first trial took place in July 30, 2014 (Kirkland, 2014). Kirkland prepared herself by researching glossaries of firework terms and effects, and developed a list of dynamic verbs to convey the movement – «coll, jet, spin, spiral, whirl, whisk, burst, spurt, shoot, spatter, splatter, spurt, gush, rain, spray, scatter, dart, whizz, zoom, float, flutter» (Kirkland, 2014) and light – «dazzling, blazing, shimmering, glittering, sparkling, glowing, glimmering, twinkling» (Kirkland, 2014). But giving an account of the display itself was not the only challenge; as Roz Chalmers from VocalEyes UK⁵ noted: «The audience is part of an exciting communal experience, and the visual atmosphere and context is vital» (Kirkland, 2014). The communal element was vital for van Uchelen’s initiative, since what he aimed to develop was a nonvisual way to still participate in and enjoy the Celebration of Light, since as Sligl notes concerning van Uchelen research and community psychology task, «whatever the life experience and skill, it’s about people willing to connect and share their teachings with the larger community» (Sligl, 2014). The linear verbal description provided by Kirkland resulted insufficient to provide that

⁵ VocalEyes is the visual descriptions society in the United Kingdom, whose foundation in 1998 precedes in time that of Vocal Eye Canada in 2012.

sense of community, but at one point, van Uchelen decided to introduce touch in the process:

At one point there was a slowly descending cluster of stars that were burning. She was describing, and I was trying to get a comprehension of how quickly it was moving down. And I said “Steph, would you trace the speed of that out in my forearm with your finger? Just so I can get an understanding of it.” And she did that, and it was through her moving her fingertips down my forearm that it gave me this feeling of speed. And it was at that moment that it became so clear that the verbal description really could benefit from this tactile physical communication component. (Van Uchelen, 2021b, 12:10)

As van Uchelen points out, it was the dynamic elements of duration, pace and trajectory of this «long trailing ember that lingered after a great barrage of shells, falling slowly and burning all the while» (Kirkland, 2014), that Kirkland was unable to communicate only through words. This instance shows the limits of discourse in making moving arts accessible for nonvisual learners: despite the fact that what van Uchelen was seeking was not a full translation of the visual display into nonvisual forms, the insufficiency of verbal descriptions to make him feel part of the event point out to the need of creative forms of Access Art that take standard measures of access beyond and really enable nonvisual learners to participate in the arts.

Continuing the journey of making fireworks accessible, after this tactile interaction, van Uchelen and Kirkland started to develop tactile strategies that translated the rhythm, trajectory, size, layering and intensity with the fingertips. They denominated this technique *FingerWorks*. The following year, *FingerWorks* became a public offering at the Honda Celebration of Light on July 29, 2015 in Vancouver, where a group of describers offered both verbal descriptions and tactile tracings on the back to people who were blind or partially sighted, using «a person's back as a kind of canvas to translate the motion of fireworks through touch» (CBS, 2015, cf. VocalEye, 2015). The sustainability of *FingerWorks* as an established access practice required van Uchelen to take the role as an educator as well, providing describing fireworks workshops that prepared describers to perform *FingerWorks*. These workshops consisted of an introduction to pyrotechnical terms and a training of the tactile cues that could be provided to convey the movement of the spectacle (VocalEye, 2016).

Van Uchelen's artistic practice continued developing collaborative forms of creative access for nonvisual learners, which after working with VocalEye led him to continue his research on fireworks and its intersections with other artistic mediums that could be made accessible for nonvisual senses, such as immersive dance pieces he has developed with All Bodies Dance Project. Eventually, van Uchelen got in touch with Vancouver-based artist Carmen Papalia, who recognized the artistic value of *FingerWorks* after experiencing them himself, and told van Uchelen: «Collin, you are an artist!» (van Uchelen, in conversation). Van Uchelen recalls how staggering this moment was, since he had never thought of himself as an artist or his practice as Access Art. From this encounter, the two artists started developing Project FireFlower, which culminated in an exhibition curated by Whitney Mashburn at Grunt Gallery at the end of 2021. In what follows, I will present Project Fireflower as an Access Art practice, emphasizing the central role of tactility both in the creative process and the exhibition display, and how it embodies principles of Disability Justice creating a space of resistance to Ocularcentric artistic practices. I will argue that the moving force behind Project Fire Flower is a displacement of van Uchelen's central PhD concern, which can be stated as follows: how can a collectivist notion of power and control lead to the empowerment of citizens, action and social change in a community? (van Uchelen, 2000: 65-78).

Always bearing in mind van Uchelen's concern for community – we can make sense of his tactile creative tactics in his recent project *Project Fire Flower* in relation to Disability Justice principles of collective access, cross-disability solidarity, and interdependence. *Project Fire Flower* (2019-2021) is a research process by Collin van Uchelen with Carmen Papalia, which started in 2019 and kept evolving until it had its first public iteration in the *Fire Flower* exhibition at Grunt Gallery which opened on October 2, 2021, and ran until December 12. For three years, Papalia and van Uchelen explored the different dimensions of pyrotechnic arts and how they could be connected to multisensory modes of perception. The title “Fire Flower” refers to the way in which fireworks borrow most of their names from flowers in virtue of the resemblance of their shell's shape and different species like the chrysanthemum, the peony, the dahlia, or the willow. During the research process for creating tactile access to the light of fireworks, van Uchelen and Papalia visited the local botanical garden of Vancouver to touch the flowers that resemble the fireworks. For other shapes of shells, like comets or the shell of

shells, they investigated household items and other everyday objects which could convey the shape of light. For the *Fire Flower* exhibition, Papalia and van Uchelen were joined by architect/designer Michael Lis, engraver Lianne Zannier, and curator Whitney Mashburn.

The exhibition at Grunt Gallery consisted of different multisensory elements that enabled nonvisual experiences of fireworks. When entering the rectangular room, visitors encountered a smooth fair wooden table, made by architect and designer Michael Lis with wood from the Vancouver area and which resembles the provisional aesthetics of the structures he has developed with Papalia. The table was placed in the center of the room. On its surface, you found the *Pyrotechnical Tableau*: diverse faux plants and flowers, a small metal sculpture capturing the spikes of light of smaller spherical shell bursts, and some household items that served as ready-made firework sculptures, were arranged and ready to be explored haptically. These *Tactile Fire Flowers* constituted touch-friendly correspondences to firework's shell shapes – the chrysanthemum, dahlia, and peony. You could hold these items, rub them against your cheek, feel them on your palms, or rotate them to grasp all of their sides. The tableau was also aesthetically pleasing for sighted visitors, who could also appreciate the contrast of the colorful faux flowers against the neutral fair wood.

On the walls around the table, there were seven *Firework Tactile Panels* made of touchable acrylic engravings. Each panel of 24” by 24” resembled the shape of a characteristic firework effect. These panels were accessible through different senses. First, you could trace the shape of the engraving with your fingertips through touch. Van Uchelen describes how «these streaks are engraved as grooves or “pathways” that can be followed by touch with a fingertip – revealing how the firework effect blossoms during its transient visible lifespan» (Van Uchelen, 2021a). Visually, the shapes were lit by colorful green, orange or magenta LED lights, in a style resembling Nam June Paik's laser light installations – the high contrast of LED lights against a black background also favored access for partially-sighted visitors. Finally, Visitors were allowed and actively invited to touch the acrylic panels, while listening to audio recordings of van Uchelen's voice reading descriptions of each firework either through the sound devices integrated in the exhibition, or accessing them in their own device using a QR code. The text version

of the description was also available on the gallery's website (van Uchelen, 2021a). Finally, two screens hang on the wall played on loop an audiovisual display of footage from pyrotechnic and musical displays designed by British Columbia's Celebration Fireworks, and of the Veverka Brothers documentary *Passfire*, which explores pyrotechnical arts around the world. Although the objective of the audiovisual final display was centrally didactic, van Uchelen, Papalia and Mashburn tried to maintain the multisensorial dimension of the footage. Apart from the works themselves, curator Whitney Mashburn, whose practice can be framed within tactile aesthetics and critical disability curatorship inspired by Georgina Kleege and Amanda Cachia, designed a space and elaborated a discourse focused on tactility that moved away from Ocularcentric ways of curating.



Fig. 36 General view of Grunt Gallery's installation *Project Fire Flower*. The firework panels hung in the walls, surrounding the central arrangement of the smooth wooden table with faux plants and objects resembling firework trajectories (October 2022). Photo credit: Dennis Ha, Grunt Gallery.



Fig. 37 Model designs for nine fireworks shells are drawn in high contrast white, orange, purple and pink on a black background. The shapes of the lines resemble the trajectories of Dahlia, Palm, Small Peony, Willow, Shell of Shells, Medium Peony, Chrysanthemum, Comets, and Large Peony. These drawings are sketches for the exhibition panels, which were made with light LEDs to increase contrast. Credit: Lianne Zannier.

I argue that the tactile strategies developed for creative access in the *Fire Flower* exhibition embody mainly three principles of Disability Justice: collective access, interdependence and cross-disability solidarity. All three principles are conceptually connected to van Uchelen’s guiding concern for community-building and social engagement as an empowering relationship for individuals. Regardless of the art form involved in his projects, van Uchelen’s practice is traversed by a preoccupation for community and communication – as he comments concerning his experience introducing touch to make fireworks accessible:

It does not replace eyesight, it’s not the same as seeing. But what it did for me, and this is the important part about this work and how it all came to be, is I created and co-created with other people a way to stay connected with this art form and this activity. Even though it wasn’t perfect, it was still a *meaningful way to be part of it* and to be able to perceive it in a way that worked for me. (van Uchelen, 2021b, my emphasis)

From van Uchelen's emphasis on the community-centered character of his Access Art practice, which privileged *meaningfully partaking* in the collective event in front of a detailed objective and technical description, I will develop the ways in which *Project Fire Flower* embodies three principles of Disability Justice, and how it does so by means of creative tactics. First and foremost, the community-centered character of *Project Fire Flower* makes palpable the ways in which all of us are interdependent. That is, our way of being in the world and experiencing it is both shaped by and dependent on being in the world with others. The radical principle of interdependence counters a false sense of individualism, which Tema Okun has linked to Supremacy Culture as connected to an idea of leadership expressed as «I am the only one», which rejects collaboration and cooperation. As she puts it

Individualism is our cultural story - that we make it on our own (or should), without help, while pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Our cultural attachment to individualism leads to a toxic denial of our essential interdependence and the reality that we are all in this, literally, together ... ANTIDOTE: eek to understand all the ways we are informed by our dominant identities and how our membership in dominant identity groups informs us both overtly and covertly (while realizing too that these identities do not have to define us); understand how membership in a dominant group (the white group, the male group, the hetero group, the wealthy group) extends psychic, spiritual, and emotional benefits as well as material benefits. (Okun, 2022b)

Project Fire Flower, and its precedent *FingerWorks* is infused with a political claim for interdependence and a community approach to a *shared* aesthetic experience. Van Uchelen understands the artform of fireworks as a community-building event, where the essential element is not the formalist description of each component, but rather the general ambiance and atmosphere of the experience. It is for this reason that as a creative tactic, the animating principle of both *FingerWorks* and *Project Fireflower* is not a technical formalism, but rather the development of a tactile form of communication. And the communication that takes place in his practice is not only discursive, but rather takes a multimodal and multisensory dimension that allows difference: different forms of communicating, and different forms of understanding.

This takes us to the second Disability Justice principle that shapes van Uchelen's practice: cross-disability solidarity. I argue that the creative tactic used to embody this principle has to do mainly with an epistemic dimension of the practice. Mainly in the *Fire Flower* exhibition, van Uchelen develops ways of access that are created from the outset

thinking of mixed-ability audiences, with visual and nonvisual learners, sighted and partially sighted visitors, who come together or on their own. The exhibition incorporates multisensory elements: the saturated light displays, the sonic recordings of van Uchelen’s voice describing the elements, the tactile acrylic panels. Therefore, we can speak of a community-guided curatorship that triggers dialogue and interaction among the publics, thus promoting cross-disability solidarity. As Leah Lakshmi claims in her chapter entitled «Making Space Accessible is an Act of Love for Our Communities» (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018a: 74-78),

I think that crip solidarity, and solidarity between crips and non(yet)-crips is a powerful act of love and I-got-your-back. It’s in big things, but it’s also in the little things we do moment by moment to ensure that we all—in all our individual bodies—get to be present fiercely as we make change (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018a: 75)

What does Lakshmi mean by the little things we do to ensure no one is left behind? Some of these actions are found in the design of the *Fire Flower* exhibition: solidarity is when van Uchelen not only provides beautiful audio descriptions of the firework effects for the blind and partially sighted, but also takes care of the visual appeal of the acrylic tableaux, for instance, so that D/deaf visitors can fully experience the exhibition in their own way. Solidarity is when touch is allowed, but the gallery provides hand sanitizer to wash your hands before you enter to ensure the safety of those most vulnerable. Solidarity is when the *Firework Tactile Panels* are intentionally hung at a height reachable by wheelchair users. And, continuing with Lakshmi, these creative access practices are a radical act of solidarity, because they show care and attentiveness to the nuances of disabled experiences. This radical act of solidarity is Disability Justice activists have backed the claim that “Access *is* Love”:

when we reach for each other and make the most access possible, it is a radical act of love. When access is centralized at the beginning dream of every action or event, that is radical love. I mean that access is far more to me than a checklist of accessibility needs—though checklists are needed and necessary. So when you work to make spaces accessible, and then more accessible, know that you can come from a deep, profound place of love. And if you can’t love us, or love yourself— know that the daily practice of loving self is intertwined with any safe room, accessible chairs, ramp. Both/and. When they are there, they show our bodies that we belong. (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018a: 76-8)

I believe that van Uchelen’s commitment to cross-disability solidarity is also deeply rooted in an epistemic belief, namely the vindication of the fact that there are many

ways of generating a comprehension of an art form, in this case fireworks, and that these diverse ways of knowing are not equivalent but still are all valid. *Fire Flower* enables precisely this cohabitation of visual and nonvisual forms of learning in a gallery space because of how it designs the exhibition experience.

And finally, the exhibition and artworks design have a component that brings us back to raw aesthetic experience in the sense of a phenomenological embodied encounter with an artistic event. I want to link this phenomenological dimension to the principle of collective access, since the multisensory character of the artworks, incorporating tactile, visual and aural elements, is fundamentally sensible. Designing from the set-out an aesthetic experience that is multisensory and embodied entails an act of defiance of Ocularcentric understandings of museum experience as an innocent and naked eye, to incorporate a fully embodied perceptive and cognitive visitor that does not need to leave any part of themselves behind when entering the gallery. To conclude, van Uchelen's artistic practice has been examined from the framework of Access Art, highlighting its commitment to Disability Justice, in particular to the principles of interdependence, cross-disability solidarity, and collective access. This reading of his practice accounts for its disruptive character, which challenges standard access as a practice of erasure of disability, and I believe provides a better understanding of his wider project of making art forms accessible for nonvisual learners, a project that cannot be understood from the limits of able-bodied imagination, which stays in the perplexity and inarticulate awe of witnessing an interest that questions their limited (and limiting) representations of blind and partially-sighted people exclaiming: «I never would have thought that someone with vision loss would be interested in having fireworks described!» (Kirkland, 2014)

7. Coming full circle: building intergenerational capacity in Georgina Kleege, Carmen Papalia, and Fayen d'Evie's practice

The case studies conclude with a particular kind of collaboration, which weaves the stories of Carmen Papalia and Georgina Kleege in tandem with Fayen d'Evie. If *Project Fire Flower* enabled us to explore the mechanisms of expansion in Access Arts through a bidirectional prompting of creative tactics that emerged out of the friendship between Papalia and van Uchelen, this last case will show how Access Arts are developing tactics

of resistance that reach a large timespan, and which are directed towards building an intergenerational practice that is able to make disabled futures possible through effective interactions among the community of practitioners, artists, activists, and allies. It is the thread that connects the first generation of access activists, exemplified by Georgina Kleege; the currently renowned practitioners, such as Carmen Papalia; and the future of the movement which keeps growing both in capacity and in institutional recognition, which Faye d'Evie makes tangible here.

The collaboration between the three artists can be traced back up to more than a decade ago, after Papalia met Kleege, who challenged his ideas of access and marked a turning point in his practice (Kleege, Papalia and Gissen, 2022).⁶ It was not until 2015 that d'Evie became an interlocutor in their discussions around access, which led to the project *The Gravity, the Levity* with Kleege presented below, a project in creative access that dismantles cultural Ocularcentrism by vindicating the senses of touch. In parallel, Papalia was also developing a tactile vocabulary for the arts with Whitney Mashburn in the series *Let's Keep in Touch*. The trajectories of Papalia, Kleege, and d'Evie – although definitely being in constant contact, discussion and mutual influence – did not intersect explicitly until the recent exhibition at the Wellcome Collection of London, *In Plain Sight*, for which Papalia, Kleege, and d'Evie collaborated with Katy West and Whitney Mashburn to create the multisensory installation *Modes of Touch*. As a parallel programming of the exhibition, the Wellcome Collection hosted a symposium organized by University of the Arts of London's research project *Beyond the Visual*, which gathered in a two-day conference Carmen Papalia, Collin van Uchelen, Georgina Kleege (in-person), Faye d'Evie, and Amanda Cachia (remotely). The case study chosen for this analysis, however, is not *Modes of Touch* due to its lack of compliance with the criteria established above, since it does not directly engage with Disability Justice principles and its transformative potential for reorganizational politics is limited because of the institutional constraints of its creation, as a commission for the collection. Nevertheless, *Modes of Touch* serves me here as a preamble to the collaboration of Georgina Kleege and Faye d'Evie, and it

⁶ Their first public collaboration took place in 2012, in a roundtable discussion organized by Amanda Cachia at the California College of Arts, on the occasion of the exhibition *What Can a Body Do: Investigating Disability in Contemporary Art*. Disabled artists Sunny Taylor, Catherine Sherwood and Laura Swanson, and CDS scholars Ann Millett-Galland, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson and Tobin Siebers joined the conversation. (Papalia, 2012) <https://carmenpapalia.com/curriculum-vitae/>

shows two dimensions that are cardinal in Access Arts: a sense of intimate community or pods that is palpable in Kleege, d'Evie and Papalia's long-term partnership; and the dynamics of guidance and caring tutelage that inform the intergenerational wisdom of Access Arts, exemplified here by how veteran artists who already have earned institutional recognition act as doulas for new practitioners, gently introducing them to the kinship networks of Access Arts and enacting "foot in the door" strategies for making room for them in institutional contexts.

The first encounter between author and Berkeley professor Georgina Kleege and artist Fayen d'Evie took place in 2016 at the KADIST Art Foundation in San Francisco to explore some elements of its collection through haptic criticism. This encounter was as intimate as it was unexpected. Kleege was already a notable American writer and Critical Disability Studies scholar. She had been a lecturer in Creative Writing at Ohio State University, the University of Oklahoma and University of California, Berkeley. Her first publication was the novel *Home for the Summer* (1989), which explored in a fictional form the experiences of a young girl returning home after spending two years in a mental health facility. However, it was her collection of essays *Sight Unseen* (1999), which brings together autobiographical stories with central issues in disability studies, such as the complexities of identifying as "legally blind", "Blind" or "visually impaired" and how such identifications affect how we culturally read an individual in the chapter 'Call it Blindness' (Kleege, 1999: 9-42). After joining the English department at University of California, Berkeley in 2003, Kleege's writing became more overtly political, vindicating the radical potential of blindness and offering a critical reading of commonplace representations of disability. In particular, her volume *Blind Rage: Letters to Hellen Keller* (2006) assesses in a nonfictional form her relationship to the figure of Hellen Keller. To account for the activist potential of *Blind Rage*, I find it fruitful to resort to Audre Lorde's idea of generative rage and anger in her essays 'Learning from the 60s' and 'The Uses of Anger', because it captures how Kleege's writing performs a critique of both representations of disability painted from the outside *and* internalized ideas that make us deem our bodyminds as invalid or less than. As Lorde puts it:

we must move against not only those forces which dehumanize us from the outside, but also against those oppressive values which we have been forced to take into ourselves. Through examining the combination of our triumphs and errors, we can examine the

dangers of an incomplete vision. Not to condemn that vision but to alter it, construct templates for possible futures, and focus our rage for change upon our enemies rather than upon each other. (Lorde, 1984: 135)

Analogously, Kleege's writing in *Blind Rage* stands up against social forces that invalidate and dehumanize blind subjects, and against the oppressive internalized ableism she experiences. From that, she would move on to build possible disabled futures, which she would stage mainly in museums. Kleege's decision to research artistic representations of blindness and mainly how visual arts can be made accessible for blind and partially-sighted visitors is connected to the fact that both her parents were plastic artists. For this reason, Kleege's deep comprehension of how nonvisual senses can afford a serious aesthetic experience can be traced back to her early training in touching art:

I grew up touching their art and touching their materials. My father was a sculptor and my mother was a painter. I know how to stretch a canvas and how to mix oil paints. My father worked in metal — he would go to junkyards and find metal scraps and weld them together, so I knew his work as he was making it and being in the studio and handling all this scrap metal. He taught me how to weld when I was a child, which tells you something about my father to put an acetylene torch in the hands of a blind child. I remember he would make models of his pieces, and a lot of times you go to art galleries and have to help with the installations and carry things. I had a lot of different experiences of their art and their friends' art. (Kleege in Wilson, 2018)

Georgina Kleege has become an expert in touching art, serving as a consultant to museums like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Tate Modern London, or the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. After experiencing numerous standard touch tours in both American and European Museums, Kleege argues that current access practices of haptic engagement suffer from two shortcomings. First, she noted how «standard museum touch tours systematically fail to capture and collate the responses of the privileged few who enjoy this exceptional access» (d'Evie and Kleege, 2018). And second, Kleege defends that touch tours offer a relevant aesthetic experience that should not be reduced to a surrogate to visual experience, so they should be offered to everyone: «My current passion – she claims, – is to advocate for touch tours not just for blind people, touch tours for everybody» (Crochet, Papalia, Mashburn and Kleege, 2022: 24:30-25:02). Her latest volume, *More Than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art* (2018) gathers her arguments in favor of the radical potential of blindness for artistic practices.

It was this advocacy in favor of the aesthetic potential of blindness that brought Georgina and d’Evie together. Fayen d’Evie is an artist and curator currently established in the bushlands of unceded Jaara country, Australia. Her artistic practice is extremely multifaceted and multisensory, often involving collaborative dynamics to craft encounters that go beyond the visual. To account for the themes and Disability Justice principles the artist is committed to, I find worth noting that although d’Evie is nowadays a PhD candidate in Curatorial Practice at Monash University, she holds a PhD in Resource Management and Environmental Studies from the Australian National University, that she completed after earning her BSc in Physics (University of Canterbury, Aotearoa, New Zealand). This training led her to work in international peacebuilding and sustainability for the UN. When analyzing her artistic practice and her collaboration with Kleege, we can find a continuing process of production and a commitment to sustainability – now in the form of the sixth principle of Disability Justice – that can be traced back to her experience in peacebuilding. Fayen d’Evie’s practice is rooted in Access Art, understanding creative access as a potential medium for both artmaking and curatorship – her work resists two common places concerning spectatorship: first, that audiences are passive, which she counterbalances with invitations to sensory engagements with the works; and second, that audiences are first and foremost viewers, thus reinforcing an Ocularcentric shaping of the arts and museum spaces. In contrast, d’Evie develops experiences where whole embodied agents are involved together in a common spacetime, prioritizing nonvisual modes of learning and of aesthetic experience. Like Kleege, she finds in blindness a radical potential to craft these kinds of events resisting and «agitating Ocularcentric norms» (The National, 2019):

Fayen draws on blindness to propose critical and imaginative methods for navigating uncertainty and the precarious; handling the tangible, intangible, and concealed; documenting ephemeral encounters through hallucinatory recall; inviting extreme myopic readings of artworks and texts; expanding the perceptual space of publication; and animating intersensory translations and conversations. (d’Evie, 2023)

Handling is a recurring topic in both her writing and artmaking: handling is a comprehensive concept that embraces a myriad of modes of touch. Handling has connotations of attention, care and affective touch, which are key constituents of what d’Evie denominates ‘myopic readings’ of artworks, that is, a way to engage with the arts

beyond the standard visual spectatorship, incorporating multisensory interactions that require beholding the work. As she puts it:

blundering and beholding not only texture the narrative, but also recur as thematic content as I trace their emergence within my artistic and curatorial practices as performative strategies generated through blindness. I insert a hyphen in ‘be-holding’ to announce a reclaiming of the etymological root of ‘beholding’, before the term’s co-option as ocular observance. In Old English, bihalden denoted deep regard or to keep hold, the conjoining of bi- ‘thoroughly’ and -halden ‘to guard, to preserve, to maintain, to take care’. As performed within my practice, be-holding implies close attention, by thoroughly regarding, handling, holding ... The relative rarity of tactile or haptic artworks creates a challenge in how to induct audiences into idiosyncratic behavioural codes of handling. (d’Evie, 2017a: 43-46)

Therefore, d’Evie establishes a connection between inducting new codes of handling and an aesthetic experience conceptualized as beholding, in the sense of taking care of the artwork.⁷ Handling constitutes a constitutive principle in the artist’s work insofar her practice invites – and almost requires – visitors to hold the artworks, to handle them with care as an essential action to activate them. This shapes a kind of haptic commitment with the work: it promises something – a disability-informed future, possibilities to sustain our bodyminds, a hope for community maybe – that can only be activated through tactile exploration. A paradigmatic example of the presence of handling in d’Evie’s work is her installation *From One Body to Another*, staged at the Casula Powerhouse in Sydney in 2017. This piece was created in collaboration with Sophie Takách, Janaleen Wolfe, Ben Phillips, Bryan Phillips and Pippa Samaya. (d’Evie, 2017b) Consisting of tactile paintings, a quadruphonic soundscape and a sculptural installation, *From One Body to Another* occupies the massive space of powerhouse’s turbine hall – in the central nave a mechanism of pulleys and wires holds smooth skin-like tactile-responsive sculptures. During the exhibition, guided tours were conducted by d’Evie herself, during which participants could engage with the sculpture, handling and caressing it using their fingertips, palms, cheeks or the back of their hand, following movement invitations led by the artist. Considering both the relational character and the title of the installation, the notion of handling comes to the fore with the implications it bears within d’Evie’s practice: handling is an action of care, which involves an interdependence

⁷ This proposal echoes Ken Wilder’s concept of the be-holder as the embodied agent that holds the artwork in a relational mode in *Beholding: Situated Art and the Aesthetics of Reception* (2020), in particular as presented in the ninth chapter ‘On repetition and beholding’, which draws on Merleau-Ponty and Gibson’s ideas of perception as a continuum with cognition which involves a whole active body.

between different agents – in this case the visitor and the non-human agency of the materiality of the sculpture; it is also a physical interaction, which is nonetheless charged with a further promise, I propose, the promise of being able to hold together a sustainable future.

Commitment to building sustainable futures deeply informs d’Evie’s artistic practice and her tactics for creating new ways of building communication. If we recall d’Evie’s background in Physics, we may be able to account for the delicate balance she keeps between two radical regimes of macro- and microscale that somehow cohabit in the physicality of her works. Namely, the macroscale is translated into contacting a past that goes back to the Cretaceous *for* a future that reaches Post-humanity – in fact, the motive of Post-humanity as a generative matrix to think of non-human languages and typographies that resist Ocularcentric understandings of writing is a recurring theme in the artist’s work (see d’Evie, 2022). On the other end, this colossal history is documented in precarious materials, in obscured local histories through embodied encounters that touch upon the intangible and invisible, and how to embody communication with those through alternative regimes of sensibility.⁸ The idea of animating intersensory communication and translations traverses d’Evie’s work and is present in all her artistic and curatorial methods. For d’Evie, translation is not to be understood as a process of transference where a message is transmitted from one language to another without any modification. There is no pure or innocent translation. In d’Evie’s practice, animating translations consist of trying to convey meaningful experiences through embodied encounters, in such a way that the notion of an abstract message is dismantled in favor of a semantically overcharged language, where the typographical shape, the texture of the support, or even the smell of the tint become significant dimensions in communication. This idea of animating translation is grounded on a conception of writing and publishing as «a visceral experience, involving the visual, tactile, aural and olfactory senses, hefted for centuries with the geologic weight of metal and wood» (d’Evie, 2019b). The visceral and embodied character of communication in d’Evie’s work opens it to questions

⁸ For instance, in the long-term project *Museum Incognita*, a collaboration with artist Katie West which consists of an «intermittent, anti-colonial museum grounded in custodial ethics, which activates gatherings and collective readings of neglected and obscured histories, through sensorial scores, performative encounters, and intertwining threads of story» (d’Evie, 2023).

concerning how to communicate with non-human and post-human interlocutors, that is, attending to the sensorial form of language – it's nonvisible signals through touch, listening and movement – we are confronted with the question of ‘how could we create signals that are significant for non-human audiences which nonetheless can detect them and engage in communication with us?’ This animating translation has been explored by Fayen mainly in the numerous iterations of her *Essays in Vibrational Poetics* (2019-2022) and in her long-term artist-led experimental publishing project 3-ply. In what follows, I will explore further how d’Evie’s notion of animating translation shapes her collaboration with Georgina Kleege and their common program for generating a vocabulary around ways of handling artworks – their collaboration, I argue, constitutes a paradigmatic case study about how Access Art practices are a privileged field of intersection between a vindication tactility and the principles of Disability Justice.

In 2015, Fayen d’Evie and Georgina Kleege started a dialogue on the transgressive character of touch in museum settings, where policies of “No Touching” had been internalized by visitors in such a way that even in exhibitions where haptic explorations of the works were encouraged, people refrained from getting their hand on the art. This “uncomfortable handling” (d’Evie and Kleege, 2018) had led to what the artists called a state of tactile amnesia that resulted in a lack of vocabulary to discuss tactile qualities in aesthetic experience. In contrast with the rich semantic field for visual aesthetic experience, Kleege found that haptic criticism demanded some development:

Even as a blind person, I have a vast vocabulary to describe visual aesthetic experience, but when I talk about touch I fall back on sets of binary adjectives: hard/soft, smooth/rough, warm/cool, etc. I crave greater complexity and precision. (Kleege, 2015)

This was the animating thought that prompted them to approach Devon Bella, the Curator of Collections at San Francisco’s KADIST collection, to propose «a dialogic and experimental way to generate descriptive and conceptual vocabulary for contemporary tactile aesthetics» (d’Evie and Kleege, 2018). In their already renowned paper ‘The Gravity, The Levity: Let Us Speak of Tactile Encounters’, published in *Disability Studies Quarterly* in 2018, d’Evie and Kleege narrate their experiences at the KADIST Art Foundation as an experiment against normative touch. The project began with the elaboration of a shortlist of works from the collection, led by Bella, who chose the

artworks taking into account both the artists' interests - «works that spoke to the social history or politics of touch, and works that were materially diverse, with textural, compositional, or tactile traces» (d'Evie and Kleege, 2018) - but also conservational concerns. The final choice consisted of four works: *From a Whisper to a Scream* (2005) by Juan Capistran; *A meditation on the possibility... of romantic love or where you goin' with that gun in your hand*, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton discuss the relationship between expressionism and social reality in Hitler's painting (2005) by Daniel Joseph Martinez; *Third Realm* (2011) by Jompert Kuswidananto; and *Untitled (Grate I/II: Shan Mei Playground/ Grand Fortune Mansion)* (2012) by Adrian Wong.



Fig. 38 Georgina Kleege and Heidi Rabben discuss Jompert Kuswidananto's *Third Realm*, an ensamblage of hanging elements that make up an invisible horse: a saddle with stirrups, a headpiece with a bridle and bit, some reins, and a tail. Kleege is bending forward, holding her white cane and tracing the invisible horse's leg with her palm, while Rabben seems to be caressing the neck of the horse with her two hands open and reaching out. Photo credit: KADIST, San Francisco.

D'Evie and Kleege could spend time with the artworks to experiment different ways of handling them in detail, paying attention to the kind of touch they invited to and the different dimensions that came to the fore when engaging in tactile encounters. Some of the handlings described by the artists include: “a delicate tracing motion with the fingertips”, “folding and unfolding”, “grasp with the whole hand”, “pull and shake with

the whole arm and upper body”, “palming and stroking” (d’Evie and Kleege, 2018). Two traits distinguish d’Evie and Kleege’s experiments from the traditional touch tours that have been organized by museums since the eighties: first, they were able to spend time with the artworks without the presence of other visitors – something that may sound counterintuitive for inclusion advocates, but that d’Evie argues that enables a kind of intimacy that is sometimes spoiled by voyeuristic behaviors from sighted audiences; and second, in contrast with the tight schedule of touch tours, the encounters with KADIST’s artworks were not affected by time constraints, thus enabling careful detailed handling of each work. As the artists conclude:

What we discovered whilst working with this collection was less about developing a vocabulary and more about observing how each piece seemed to require, even dictate, a different kind of haptic engagement. Our conversation brought into focus the different kinds of touching we were doing—tracing, pinching, stroking, manipulating, folding, tapping, grasping, shaking— and the different body parts enlisted to do it—fingertips, palms, whole hand, forearms, whole arms, whole body. (d’Evie and Kleege, 2018)

The final stage of the project consisted of a one-day exhibition of the artworks, conceived as a public event with limited capacity, where attendees could tactilely engage with them following d’Evie and Kleege’s instructions or suggestions, which originated from their longer explorations of each work. Most of these instructions were presented in the performative lecture delivered by d’Evie and homonymous with the exhibition: *The Gravity, The Levity*. In her presentation, the artist vindicated the necessity of an experimental approach to the arts, recovering Robert Hooke’s defence of attention as an essential component for science during his time as the Curator of Experiments at the Royal Society in the 17th century. Hooke developed a taxonomy of qualities to aid attentive visual inspection and manual handling – coarseness, moistness, fluidity, sonorousness (Hooke, 1971: 36) – among which appeared the terms after which the project was named: the gravity, the levity. Finally, d’Evie resorted to Fiona Candlin (2010) and Constance Classen’s (2017) studies on nineteenth-century museums and touch to argue that touch had been labelled as transgressive in a code of decorum established after museums were opened for wide audiences, leading to a tactile amnesia that requires attention to be resisted. Centering touch in aesthetic experience, d’Evie concluded, «might offer new conversations on materiality and immateriality, the politics of space,

gendered politics, race politics, migrant politics, social interrelationships, intimacy, reverence, or fear» (d'Evie and Kleege, 2018).

After having presented *The Gravity, The Levity*, I will analyze how the project establishes creative access tactics that are shaped by Disability Justice Principles. Particularly, d'Evie and Kleege's experimentation regards the principles of leadership of those most impacted, sustainability and collective access. Aside from this, it is worth noting that the project can be considered as an instance of Access Art because it explicitly challenges standard access and historical access services in museums, like touch tours, turning the tables on the distribution of knowledge and expertise in museums and collections: the core of the experiment is the hypothesis that blind and partially-sighted people are not to be recipients of second-string knowledge provided by sighted curators and educators, on the contrary, they are agents of knowledge who can generate a nonvisual understanding of artworks that is *as valuable as* its ocular inspection. This hypothesis is animated by a social and political commitment to the redistribution of the senses in collections and museum spaces in such a way that it shifts towards an attentiveness and care toward materiality that broadens the scope of what is human beyond historical normates and even towards posthuman agents. This commitment is performed using the following creative access tactics.

Firstly, the project departs from a premise of equality between the participants – d'Evie, Kleege, and curator Devon Bella – in terms of epistemic subjects and experts, that is, they engage in a collaboration between equals where the capacity to generate tactile knowledge of Kleege and d'Evie, and their expertise as people who have a rich experience on tactile engagement with the arts are recognized from the start. This contrasts with standard power relations in collections and museum environments where people with disabilities are considered passive spectators and service recipients who cannot contribute to the conversation, whereas curators and educators are schoolmasters teaching the audiences some univocal artistic truth that would be inaccessible for the publics without their mediation. It is this epistemic authority that creeps under established codes of decorum that discipline bodies in such museum environments. In *The Gravity, The Levity*, experimentation is thus guided by a premise of equality that constitutes a tactic shaped by the Disability Justice principle of Leadership of the Most Impacted. As such, it

subverts power dynamics and moves into a mode of leadership where the knowledge generated by d'Evie and Kleege's engagements with the artworks is foregrounded. In *The Gravity, The Levity*, touching artworks is informed by those most impacted, that is blind and partially-sighted people, who are usually missing in decision making processes where touch tours are designed and whose feedback is also absent in this standard access services. Meanwhile, *The Gravity, The Levity* imagines a future where tactile engagement is as valuable and visual engagement in the arts and puts nonvisual learners in a privileged position to attend to the tactile qualities of artworks. As adrienne maree brown argues, imagining structures of leadership that prioritize the most impacted moves us toward liberation because it enables us to «imagine who we need to be in order to move and grow in life-affirming directions» (maree brown, 2019) that widen the scope of whose agency is permitted in knowledge-generating and interpretative practices.

Secondly, d'Evie and Kleege's project develops tactics that bring to the fore the Disability Justice principle of sustainability in a particular way that can only be accounted for when we consider d'Evie's artistic work concerning posthumanity and Kleege's live-long engagement with art making as a *facture*. The reason is that geniting an alternative temporality for tours in *The Gravity, The Levity* is a shaping force concerning the kinds of relationships that it promotes not only among human agents – a community-building especially salient during the closing event – but also (and even more emphatically) among human and non-human agents *through materiality*. The project invites us to conceive a non-human agency that comes from the materiality of the artworks themselves and shapes the way we engage with them through touch: each work invites a different way of touching, and *The Gravity, The Levity* explores precisely mechanisms of cocreation with that material invitation. And on the other hand, the attention to materiality connects with Fayen d'Evie's exploration of posthuman communication because guiding one's action and establishing a relationship with the work that is not based on discursive or visual cues, but rather on tactile cues that come from the material itself and its properties constitutes a language that resists standard human linguistic codes and opens up a way of establishing relationships with non-human materiality that require a time that is not the normative time of accelerated capitalist productivity and consumption. Therefore, it is through this attentiveness to materiality that *The Gravity, The Levity* commits to the principle of sustainability builds a timescale for touch-centered relationships, which understanding

bodyminds and other living systems as constantly in co-creation and interaction with their environments, at their own pace.

Finally, the collective character of access constitutes a touchstone of *The Gravity*, *The Levity*. That is, both the principle of equality and the development of touch-centered relationships constitute tactics to work towards collective access. However, we can distinguish a separate tactic that corresponds to the commitment to collective access in the celebration of the closing public event, because the public one-day exhibition is the instance that moves beyond d'Evie and Kleege's privilege to tactilely engage with the artworks toward a collective experience of such a haptic access. In numerous occasions Kleege has mentioned how restricting touch tours to the blind and partially-sighted foreclosed the possibility of bringing a pleasurable experience to wider audiences, and at the same time undermined tactile engagement a second-ranking mode of aesthetic experience. By opening up the results of their experimentation to the community, Kleege and d'Evie vindicated not only collective access, but also the epistemic value of cripstemologies that offered new ways of experience artworks. By doing so, they committed themselves to collective access, breaking down single-issue understandings of disability that categorize sight as a dichotomy of either/or - sighted or blind – honoring the variety of sight experiences and building an experience where participants had their own agency and co-created the tour in a way where they were not recipients of a standard access measure that erased their own experience. On the contrary, collective access was built as a collective temporary consensus that unfold throughout the event creating a space in which, as Sins Invalid puts it: «we can share responsibility for our access needs ... we can balance autonomy while being in community, we can be unafraid of our vulnerabilities knowing our strengths are respected» (Sins Invalid, 2016: 19).

CONCLUDING REMARKS: OPENING THE DOOR FOR UPCOMING CO-CONSPIRATORS

At the beginning of this thesis, a series of aims and desires were established as the guiding forces of the research process. To conclude, I want to assess the level of achievement of these aims, tracing the itinerary of the four core chapters of this dissertation as a goal-oriented structure that has been crafted to present with as much as clarity as possible the main contributions of the research. Above all, this thesis wanted to build bridges between two fields of inquiry that were implicitly kindred but had not been explored hand in hand: Disability Justice-informed CDS, and philosophies of liberation ingrained in the tradition of American Pragmatist thought. These two communities share a transformative spirit that orients them in a similar direction, namely, a critical standpoint from which they challenge established models and structures at different levels of organization. In epistemology, dualistic thinking that separates and reifies object and subject. In politics, naturalized and anti-democratic systems of oppression that police bodyminds locking them into a designated occupation. In experience, impoverished conceptions of sensory experience and embodiment are governed by a privilege of the visual – e.g., an Ocularcentrism – that over-intellectualizes and excludes nonvisual learners. It is this deep philosophical shift that is the common ground upon which connections between Disability Justice and Pragmatism can be built. Weaving the bridges was precisely the animating force behind this research and, given the academic format of this dissertation, the desire was specially to introduce the rich movement of Disability Justice to contemporary Pragmatist audiences.

To do so, the particular movement within Disability Justice of Access Arts has constituted a privileged ground to build these connections. The case studies of Access Arts were the anchoring points that brought to praxis the argument conceptually developed in chapters one and three. The assessment of the aims is based on two indicators: the argumentative success of the development of the connections between Disability Justice and philosophical arguments within Pragmatist trends, and of the account of the case studies; and the results of the discussion of the connections in both Disability Justice and Pragmatism forums between 2020 and 2023.

In this dissertation, I have argued that Access Arts practices constitute a source of tactics of resistance that are developed in the field of the arts. Such tactics are part of a broader strategy that coincides with the principles and the goal of collective liberation of Disability Justice as a movement. These tactics, it has been argued, rely on reconfigurations of the senses in aesthetic experience as a way to transform social distributions and occupation, leading to transformative justice dynamics that respond to ableist oppression. To make sense of this tactics, two resources have been presented: a historiographic interpretation, and a theoretical framework that makes sense of the connection between such histories and current practices in Access Arts.

Throughout the chapters of this dissertation, the theoretical framework underlying Disability Justice artistic practices has been disclosed - this framework has drawn on liberation philosophies and social justice movements that helped us make sense of Disability Justice's principles. In doing so, the potential of DJ to become a place for coalitions between movements that seek emancipation and a qualified collective liberation that makes room for all bodyminds has become palpable. The bridges build between Ecofeminism, Trans Liberation, Climate Justice, Fat Liberation, among many others, and Disability Justice show how the movement has an expanding character in virtue of which solidarity, interdependence and alliance become central. Disability Justice *is* Collective Liberation to the extent that it holds a promise for dreaming disabled liberated futures that make possible paths for thriving in communities that have not been imagined yet by other social justice movements. The theoretical framework provided in this thesis aims to fill a gap of underexplored potentialities in academia, which have until now fallen short from responding to the hyperactive impulse in Disability Justice activist and artistic practices that are currently taking place across the globe. Again, it is only thanks to these practices that the framework sketched makes sense: as a tool, not in an instrumental way or as a means, but rather as a resource with its own value insofar it takes charge of «organizing experiences satisfactorily» (Siegfried, 1996: 6). This theoretical contribution, as announced in the introduction, has departed from the Pragmatist premise of a continuum in experience between theory and praxis, and perception and cognition, which justifies how the exploration of multisensory – and saliently tactile – aesthetic experiences in Access Arts are connected to deep philosophical and political reconfigurations within DJ.

In the first chapter, I have provided a historiographic proposal that has revisited the history of the social consideration of the senses from a standpoint that connects the disregard for tactile senses with an ableist Ocularcentrism that justifies social orders based on able/disabled dualisms. These (hi)stories have traced a line from Antiquity to the dawn of the Modern era where museum institutions are established – running through Antiquity, Christianity, and the Reform. Throughout, I have shown how the tension between a hegemonic Ocularcentric passion and a marginal defense of tactile potentials shapes Modern Sciences and Modern systems of knowledge which, in turn, would shape the distribution of the first public museums. These revision of the forces shaping museums has served me to understand the system of values underlying the making of these institutions, most importantly how the high value placed on vision as a source of knowledge and aesthetic appreciation and a damnation of touch as impure led to a government of bodies and senses that banned ways of being in the world from accessing such spaces. This build-up justifies the ways in which museums are made inaccessible in ways that go beyond architectural barriers, and helps us to make sense of the reasons behind creative access tactics that respond – directly or indirectly – to the inherited value system ingrained in the functioning of museum institutions. For example, only by way of acknowledging the role played by Modern sciences in the shaping of the museum can we understand how Georgina Kleege and Fayen d’Evie’s appropriation of Robert Hooke’s terminology *The Gravity, the Levity* (d’Evie & Kleege, 2018) has a rebel and resisting power when it is used to transform sensory distributions at San Francisco’s KADIS Foundation. Therefore, the archaeology of touch traced in chapter I provides, first and foremost, a history in relation to which we can recognize the far-reaching impact of Access Arts practices and the deep shift they entail in relation to the ancestral discourses on the senses and the value of bodyminds – be it epistemological, aesthetic, or political.

After recovering these histories, in chapter II, this dissertation has been located within a theoretical framework that builds bridges between Rancière’s notion of the distribution of the sensible and Pragmatist theories of symbol systems and aesthetic experience, which accounts for the connection between sensory redistribution and political transformation – i.e. for how Access Arts sensory tactics can dismantle Ocularcentric ableist regimes. After distinguishing the senses of touch – a basic level of somatic and sensorimotor experience – from the regime of tactility, which encompasses

scientific, political and cultural discourses on touch, I have used Rancière to understand how a sensory distribution in aesthetic experience that challenges Ocularcentric orderings could lead to new political orderings that enable dreaming disabled futures liberated from ableist oppression. Here, Rancière's concept of sensory regimes and how this concept enables us to explain the overlapping and complex relation between politics and aesthetics, and has been enriched by Pragmatist understandings of aesthetic symbol systems – Goodman and Noë's – and aesthetic experience in Dewey. The main outcome of this chapter has been the shaping of a framework within which Access Arts practices can be understood as a response to Chapter I's historiography of touch from an Ocularcentric standpoint. In front of the hegemony of vision that distributes bodyminds in ableist sensory regimes, Access Arts can be understood as a synesthetic embodied practice that performs a reorganizational worldmaking. In Chapter II, this transformation has been conceptualized as follows: Access Arts, as a reorganizational practice of worldmaking, is encountered by bodyminds in aesthetic experience that is mutually transformative. In creative practices in Access Art, this transformation takes place as a trigger that enters in a non-direct causal relationship with new political regimes of the sensible, through an embodied experience that foregrounds touch as an agential and caring connection to the environment and human and non-human others, in opposition to abstract Ocularcentric and dualistic conceptions of the self.

In the third chapter, which is the central contribution of this thesis, I have examined each principle of Disability Justice from the theoretical framework traced above. Departing from an assumption that sensory reorganization and creative practices in Disability Justice-informed Access Art had a politically transformative potential, each principle was connected to a kindred approach which made it possible to unearth its deep philosophical implications and how its seemingly limited scope had far-reaching roots and was framed in a broader movement for collective liberation. To connect it with the previous chapter, the outcome of the analysis of each principle was a reasoned account of how each principle's theoretical basis would shape the sensory tactics of Disability Justice-based artistic practices in Access Arts, which in turn were vindicated as politically reorganizational and radically transformative.

To conclude, the final chapter has traced the aforementioned sensory tactics of resistance within the stories of Access Arts practitioners - Amanda Cachia, Carmen Papalia, Collin van Uchelen, Georgina Kleege, and Fayen d'Evie. I have foregrounded how Access Art is a privileged ground for dismantling compulsory abled-bodiedness because it cancels functioning standards of normalcy and activates social imagination in a way that forces us to break free from the deficiency model of disability, thus experiencing spaces where joyful disabled lives are not only possible, but granted and celebrated.

The motivation behind this trajectory has been two-fold. First, this dissertation has tried to show the philosophical potential of Access Arts as a practice within Disability Justice – it has been argued that the tactics of resistance developed by artists and practitioners in this trend are shaped by historically-significant concepts that are shared by other liberation movements and critical political philosophies. As such, I have tried to build bridges that can be specifically fruitful for Pragmatist audiences who wish to expand their inquiry towards contemporary fields of struggle in social justice and collective liberation. Access Arts as creative matrixes to develop embodied caring knowledge have been vindicated in a way that they can become exemplary sources of tactics which can become hermeneutically powerful also retrospectively. That is, by valuing the philosophical implications of Disability Justice-informed Access Arts practices, not only have I wanted to endow it with the significance that it corresponds to them nowadays, but also I wanted to locate it in a common frame that makes it possible for us to make sense of this practices in relation to historical precedents; and to make sense of these precedents in relation to what is going on today in Access Arts. For this reason, I hope that this dissertation can become a springboard for further research opportunities which focus on specific individual cases – a specificity that has not been sacrificed in this case in favor of the interest of providing a wide panoramic landscape of Access Arts and how they function in reference to Disability Justice principles. I propose:

1. to work on each principle in particular, bringing it to its last consequences;
2. to deeply engage in Access Art networks and collaborate with living artists or specific collectives to understand how to account for their practice;
3. to use the framework proposed here to revisit authors who may have a kindred approach to the Disability Justice principles as examined here with the aim of recovering historical

sources of tactics of resistance and appropriate them today to expand the repertoire of creative tactics Access Arts can make use of.

The second motivation of this dissertation is connected to the first one, and should not be forgotten when engaging in more academic work on this field. Namely, what has driven this research has been the ambition to vindicate the importance of networks of care, affects and access intimacy as a standpoint when conducting research and as a rigorous methodology when bridging Pragmatist approaches with Critical Disability Studies and Disability Justice-informed Access Arts. After working closely with Access Arts practitioners and artists, this research has made palpable how current – contextual, provisional, experimental – artistic practices that alter sensory distribution as a means for non-directly unchaining processes of social change and releasing the imagination for disabled futures have a deep anchoring in philosophical approaches that critique Ocularcentric hegemonic cultural paradigms of Western thought. Challenging and bracketing the notion of normalcy in the arts can become a training practice for building different habits that in turn transform how we establish relationships with others – if Access Arts can generate spaces were *exceptionally* we attend to access needs, privilege community and mutual exchange, and foreground interdependence, there can be a transference into everyday dynamics that slowly reshape the norm. This dissertation wants to be a catalyst for such transformation – by bringing a multisensory and saliently tactile revolution in aesthetic experience, creative tactics and curating the arts, we can make other sensory distributions imaginable. I hope that by endowing this transformation with the philosophically rigorous discourse that it triggers, institutional spaces can more easily recognize its value and make room to other modes of experiencing art. If these spaces start to proliferate, Access Arts could lead to an extension of its shaping Disability Justice principles beyond artistic practices and toward guidelines for an ethical life in the manifold social domains. The liberation of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ disabled folks has long been disregarded by emancipatory movements, and is the next stronghold to join the network of solidarity among intersectional social justice struggles – as philosophy scholars, we can contribute to the reinforcement of this solidarity by providing arguments and conceptual connections that make sense of this alliance. To constitute a step towards this collective liberation summarizes the sole desire that wants to be preserved from this thesis.

Appendix 1: A rubric of Disability Justice principles and creative tactics for reorganization in Access Arts' case studies

DJ Principle	Kindred approach	Creative tactic	Case studies	Contextual issues addressed
1. Intersectionality	Black Feminist Intersectionality	Access check-ins in the creative process	Process creation of <i>A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery</i> , Carmen Papalia	Acknowledging the multiple oppressions enacted by the institutional authority of the museum on queer, trans, disabled, BIPOC bodyminds
		Provisional and adaptative practices that make room for multiple overlapping identities <i>in</i> institutional and public space, marking them as accessible and attentive to triggers	<i>Provisional Structures 1</i> and 2, Carmen Papalia: Black balloons installation, Disability Filibuster screening, and Vo Vo recordings	Creating trauma-informed care in museum spaces to welcome historically marginalized communities – focusing on Black, Indigenous, trans liberation and harm reduction.
		Community-guided curatorship and creation that triggers dialogue and interaction among the publics	Working sessions for <i>A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery</i> , Carmen Papalia	Developing ways of access thought for mixed-ability audiences which allow a multiplicity of learning styles
2. Leadership of the most impacted	Jane Addams' connected leadership and liberatory leadership	Disabling the visual through multisensory experiences prioritizing touch	<i>Blind Field Shuttle</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>The Touchy Subject</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>The Gravity, the Levity</i> , Fayen d'Evie and Georgina Kleege	the epistemological potential of nonvisual senses
		Access as agency and decision-making	Training sessions for museum staff and educators by Carmen Papalia at the Guggenheim (<i>The Touchy Subject</i>), McKenzie Art Gallery (<i>Provisional structures 1</i>) and the Vancouver Art Gallery (<i>Provisional Structures 2</i>); and by Kleege and d'Evie at the KADIST (<i>The Gravity, the Levity</i>)	underrepresentation of lived experience of disability in leadership roles, recognizing their wisdom, and compensating epistemic discrimination through narrative and storytelling strategies.

		Celebrating non-visual senses developing nonvisual communication that is pleasurable	<i>Project Fire Flower</i> , Collin van Uchelen and Carmen Papalia	Challenging ableist imagination of disabled bodymind's desire, pleasure and community-making through contact
3. Anti-capitalism	Federici and Fraser on labor and productivity	Institutional critique from within the institution	<i>The Touchy Subject</i> , Carmen Papalia	Criticizing the consumerism and aesthetic dullness behind standard access measures like touch tours
		Institutional critique from outside the institution	<i>A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery</i> , Carmen Papalia	Denouncing the colonial, imperialist, ableist and capitalist roots of big museum institutions
		Challenging 'marketable' art practices and circuits, and access as commodity through ephemeral practices that cannot be standardized for reproduction	<i>Blind Field Shuttle</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>Mobility Device</i> , Carmen Papalia	Resisting the requirements of commodification in cultural and artistic institutions, re-framing access as a unique intimate experience that has its own temporality
4. Cross-movement organizing	Feminism for the 99%	"Foot in the door" strategy	<i>Provisonal structures 1 and 2</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>The Gravity, the Levity</i> , Fayen d'Evie and Georgina Kleege	Joining forces with liberation movements through allyship, to occupy and change arts and culture from within
		Mixed-ability organizing	<i>Provisonal structures 1 and 2</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery</i> , Carmen Papalia	Recognizing how each bodymind's experience and standpoint is partial and <i>never assuming</i> the other's standpoint

5. Recognizing wholeness	Deweyan growth	nonvisual senses as a design principle	<i>Project Fire Flower</i> , Collin van Uchelen and Carmen Papalia	Dismantling narrations of abjection in favor of diversity of modes of perceiving
		replaceability of markers of disability	<i>Blind Field Shuttle</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>Mobility Device</i> , Carmen Papalia	Unearthing social disabling structures as contingent
6. Sustainability	Rest is resistance	Pleasure Access in touching, caressing and prioritizing joy in aesthetic experiences of access	<i>Provisional Structures 2</i> , Carmen Papalia (featuring Dreaming sessions with Rebel Fayola Rose) <i>The Gravity, the Levity</i> , Georgina Kleege and Fayen d'Evie	Resisting acceleration in favor of making room for a paused gentle experience which disturbs the fast-paced rhythm of cultural capital
		Slow decision-making, asking what feels possible today, thus challenging productivity and project timelines	<i>Provisional structures 1 and 2</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery</i> , Carmen Papalia	Dismantling normative time in favor of Crip Time, challenging notions of productivity that drain our bodyminds. Reclaiming time.
7. Cross-disability solidarity	Tactical subjectivity and world travelling	Centering collective care	<i>Provisional structures 1</i> , Carmen Papalia	Recognizing the multiple oppressions and privileges we enact and using our own privilege (masking, passing) to make room for the most affected.
		Generating spaces of gentleness for nuanced disability experiences	<i>Provisional structures 2</i> , Carmen Papalia	Challenging sensory distributions governed by urgency and austerity, reorganizing it according to the needs of those who are present
		Multi-sensory artworks that incorporate tactile and aural elements, and visual design that favors the partially-sighted	<i>Project Fire Flower</i> , Collin van Uchelen and Carmen Papalia	Rejecting single-issue standpoints of disability and vindicating that disabilities are multiple and mutable

8. Interdependence	Care in Pragmatism and Ecofeminism	Prioritizing collective works in institutions	<i>Provisional structures 1 and 2</i> , Carmen Papalia	Committing to a shared responsibility around access needs and care, challenging individualism in favor of interdependence
		Creating shared aesthetic experiences	<i>Blind Field Shuttle</i> , Carmen Papalia <i>Project Fire Flower</i> , Collin van Uchelen and Carmen Papalia	Understanding of the artform as a community experience
9. Collective Access		Access check-ins	<i>A Collective Audit of the Vancouver Art Gallery</i> , Carmen Papalia	Resisting standard individual access in favor of temporary agreements that are first and foremost collective, reorganizing the commons
		Challenging standard access to favor access intimacy	<i>The Gravity, the Levity</i> , Georgina Kleege and Fayen d'Evie	Vindicating the affective and interpersonal dimension of access beyond legal standards
		Designing from the set-out an aesthetic experience that is multisensory and embodied	<i>Project Fire Flower</i> , Collin van Uchelen and Carmen Papalia <i>The Touchy Subject</i> , Carmen Papalia	Centering disability as a universal condition and not as a peripheral, marginal or exceptional condition of bodyminds. Making vulnerability tangible.
10. Collective Liberation	Audre Lorde: community for liberation	Dreaming disabled futures	<i>Provisional structures 1 and 2</i> , Carmen Papalia (featuring Rebel Fayola Rose)	Imagining possible social and political organizations where disabled and Mad bodyminds can <i>thrive</i> in joy and abundance

Appendix 2: How mapping pods enabled this research to resist Academic Ableism and Sanism

A2.1. RE: First contact (Tourtour, 2020)

In December 2014, the journal *On Curating* published its twenty-fourth issue, dedicated to contemporary approaches to education in museum spaces. I stumbled upon Amanda Cachia's contribution to the issue when researching museum activities centered on diverse embodiments for the current dissertation in 2020. In her paper 'Disability, Curating, and the Educational Turn: The Contemporary Condition of Access in the Museum' (Cachia, 2014), Cachia made the case for an expansion of the scope of access beyond compliance with architectural standards, describing in detail Carmen Papalia's *The Touchy Subject: A Sensory Tour* (2013e). Papalia's proposal was an exercise that involved diverse agents of the museum, from the educational department to visitors' experience, at the Guggenheim Museum of New York, that started with training sessions and culminated in one-to-one touch tours that went beyond the collection to explore the different features and navigational elements of the building itself. Curiously enough, Cachia's paper would mark a "turn" in my research process as well.

In July 2020, I took an adventurous chance and sent an email to the contact email that appeared in Papalia's website, with the subject title "First contact - Picasso, accessibility and tactile values", and an assumption that I would not get a response. To my surprise, Papalia responded with genuine interest and an invitation to e-meet and discuss how we could help each other. Two years and a half later, Papalia has become one of the strongest presences in this dissertation, and I have been a co-facilitator with him in accessibility trainings for the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Contemporary Art Gallery of Vancouver, as well as the research assistants in projects like Pain Pals. Apart from valuable contributions to the reflection on access and Access Art, Papalia has been the nexus that has made possible connections with the different artists and curators that have been narrated in chapter IV. Papalia's capacity as a community-building agent is probably one of the virtues that has put him in a central spot in Disability Justice and the movement that vindicates Access Art not only in Canada, but also in the United States and Europe. It is for this reason that I want to open the practice-based part of this

dissertation with a discussion of his work which, hopefully, will help us make sense of contemporary practices of Access Art and capture the main elements of Papalia's activity throughout the last years.

A2.2. "Art and Writing in the Pandemic Era" (Okanagan, 2021)

In September 2020, I was researching the impact of Carmen Papalia's Open Access manifesto on socially engaged art programs in Canada, when I came across Matthew Rader's profile in the directory of University of British Columbia's Okanagan campus. In his teaching philosophy, Rader quoted Papalia's manifesto explicitly (the only quote in his profile) as follows:

I strive for a learner-centred environment in which the classroom is an "emergent, collectively-held space" and where we acknowledge that "each participant carries a body of local knowledge." (Papalia, Carmen. "An Accessibility Manifesto for the Arts." *Canadian Art*, 2 Jan. 2018) (Rader, 2018)

Following the thread that connected Rader to Carmen led me to the compilation of poems *Visual Inspection* (2019), which was vastly dedicated to Papalia's social practice participatory interventions, intertwining with a narration of Rader's own lived experience of chronic illness. In a meeting with Carmen, we discussed the book, pondering how creative writing could be Open Access too, and the ways in which academic environments can support that. After the encounter, Carmen put me in contact with Matthew Rader. At that time, I was looking for an opportunity to discuss my PhD research in a different academic environment, but travel restrictions due to COVID19 hindered any options to move to Okanagan for a short stay. Anyway, Rader and I met remotely via Zoom and he was kind enough to discuss the writing I had done so far. He also offered me to join the course CRWR 382 & VISA 290: Art and Writing in the Pandemic Era, a second-year module on special topics in Creative Writing and Visual Arts he was teaching with photographer Andreas Rutkauskas, as a TA and invited lecturer. The module took place from May until August 2021, and it was an opportunity to learn more about the collaborative creative process behind Rader's writing, and most importantly to experience how Disability Justice dynamics of access could be integrated in online teaching settings in higher education. It is through this experience of commitment with attending to the access needs of all of those present in the room, which Rader performed with the easiness

of habitus, that I could appreciate the level of care and access intimacy that inhabits his writings in *Visual Inspection*.

A2.3. *El arte y lo humano* (Medellín/Melbourne/Barcelona, 2021)

The first time Fayen d'Evie's work became part of this dissertation's discussion was in summer 2020, when Papalia mentioned how academic interest was growing concerning tactility, explaining that he was aware of d'Evie conducting an artistic research project at the University of Monash where she discussed his work, among other. However, I did not e-meet d'Evie until the following year, when I was preparing the paper for the conference *VII Encuentro Ibérico de Estética: El arte y lo humano* (April 21-21, 2021, online). That year, the encounter on aesthetics and philosophy of art was taking place online due to the COVID19 travel restrictions, which enabled me to collaborate with Dr. Beatriz Salazar Duque, from the University of Antioquia, who specializes in environmental aesthetics. We found common ground in the way both Critical Disability Studies and Environmental Aesthetics introduce an embodied and caring perspective that challenges disinterested Kantian aesthetic experience. In discussion with Dr. Salazar Duque, we considered that the work of artists Carolina Caycedo and Fayen d'Evie were paradigmatic because they introduced handling with care and multisensory dimensions in artworks that fully or partly reflected on environmental concerns related to humanity and post-humanity. The choice of living women artists was deliberate, since it offered the opportunity to establish a dialogue with them concerning the interpretation we were providing. Papalia got me in touch with Fayen, and we met at (unseemly) hours via Zoom: Beatriz connecting from Medellin, Fayen from Melbourne, and myself from Barcelona. The encounters with d'Evie proved to be extremely thought-provoking and it was after engaging with her discourse that I was convinced that her work could be a privileged territory to develop tactile aesthetics as a branch of aesthetics in its own right.

That same year, during fall 2021, I became part of UAL's research project *Beyond the Visual: Non-Sighted Modes of Engaging Art*, led by Dr. Ken Wilder and Dr. Aaron McPeake. D'Evie was part of the team, as was Georgina Kleege, and it was through the multiple online encounters within this project that we continued connecting throughout this dissertation. It was in the closing symposium of *Beyond the Visual*, which took place

in London's Welcome Collection in October 2022, that I finally met in person with Georgina Kleege, who was one of the keynote speakers. Although d'Evie and Kleege have a notable artistic and academic trajectory separately, the decision to present as a case study one of their main collaborations aims to show the centrality of co-creation in Access Art. Moreover, I believe *The Gravity, the Levity* to be one of the most conceptually mature projects in tactile aesthetics to be developed so far, having provided a completely original semantic field and an experimental framework for tactile engagement with artworks *through* lived experience.

A2.4. Community, always (London, 2022)

I was introduced to Collin van Uchelen's work by Carmen Papalia, who was developing the *Fire Flower* exhibition at the same time as *Provisional Structures* at the MacKenzie Art Gallery – Carmen explained how Collin's work was exemplary of Open Access as a way to vindicate pleasurable access, measures and actions that we really want to be offered, instead of relying on assumptions of what kind of accessibility disabled folks need. Finally, I met Collin in London, during the *Beyond the Visual* symposium at the Welcome Collection in October 2022. For three days, Carmen, Collin, Georgina Kleege, artist David Johnson and artist Barak adé Soleil formed a small care web that moved across the labyrinthic basement floor of the Welcome building – checking in each other's access needs, taking breaks to spoon up, and discussing the way in which institutions could hold spaces for Disability culture.

It was thanks to the long late conversations in London that I became convinced that Collin's work was deeply rooted in the principles of Disability Justice. His artistic practice can only be fully accounted for when we consider his background in community psychology and his task as an active force in the movement of collective living, where social bonding and interdependence come to the fore. For this reason, I aim to provide a reading of Project Fire Flower that includes its social and political dimensions, going beyond the didactic role it accomplishes explaining firework effects to both sighted and non-visual learners.

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