

Disability in the Arts

Life with a physical disability has allowed me a unique and humbling perspective that has manifested in my art work. I create art with and for people who live with various types of physical and/or mental limitations.

Because my work deals with issues of accessibility, it is essential for me to make my work accessible to people with a range of different abilities. The use of non-traditional materials and technology in my installations allows me to incorporate the senses of smell, taste, sound, and touch in addition to providing the more traditional visual experience.

Because I live with a wheelchair, collaboration has been an essential element in my work and life. Using the computer as an art medium has allowed me the freedom and access to create virtual worlds that would have been impossible in my life. No longer do I need assistance to move a block of marble or build a room. The computer has given me all the tools I need to accomplish these tasks. Imagination is now my limitation.

My work is often referred to as interdisciplinary because I often use more than one medium to provide additional access to communication. Often the work is interactive, so the participant can experience art rather than

just see it. The focus in my studies lies in educating and encouraging participants – regardless of prior experience, physical limitations, age, or ethnicity – to examine the relevance of art and accessibility in their own lives. For example, by incorporating a medium like Braille into an installation, I can attempt to change an art piece to be more inclusive for a visually impaired audience.

I believe art is fundamentally a communicative experience that can be and should be shared by all. My research method includes a hands-on approach, working collaboratively with several different groups and individuals to create art pieces that have been specifically designed to incorporate more than the traditional visual experience.

What one person might feel is important or beautiful another may not. I have found that by displaying work without an emphasis solely on the visual aspect, artistic integrity is still maintained. By including elements such as a wheelchair, Braille translations, and audio descriptions, individuals without mental or physical limitations may re-evaluate and gain a deeper appreciation for their own abilities by not only seeing art but experiencing and interacting with it.



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