

# Gallery & Exhibition Design: Critical Museology & Creative Accommodation

ART 591 | SDSU School of Art + Design | Fall 2022



Emily Barker, "Grabber" (2020) (photo by Svet Jacqueline)

## Course Information

Instructor: Amanda Cachia (she/her) Email:

[acachia@sdsu.edu](mailto:acachia@sdsu.edu)

Class Meeting:

## Course Description

This course critically examines museological practice, contemporary exhibitions and artistic practices that focus on conceptual and creative aspects of access. Oftentimes exhibitionstack on access once the artwork has already been executed and ready to be installed in the museum or gallery. But what if the artists were to ponder access as an integral and critical part of their artwork? Can access be creative and experimental? And furthermore, can the curator and exhibition designer also fold access into their practice, while working collaboratively with artists, considering it as a theoretical and practical generative force that seeks to make an exhibition more engaging for a widerdiversity of audiences?

This class will look at the growing number of artists, curators, and scholars who ponder these ideas of ad-hoc, experimental and underground approaches to access within exhibition-making and artistic practices. The goal is to consider how, through these nascent exhibition models and art practices, enhanced experiences of access in the museum can be a shared responsibility amongst museum workers, curators, and artists, in tandem with the public, so that access becomes a zone of intellectual and creative “accommodation,” rather than strictly a discourse on policy. We will look at case studies which provide a template for how access might be implemented by individuals, artists, curators, museum administrators and educators given the growing need to offer as many modalities of access as possible within cultural institutions. Museums acknowledge the necessity and urgency to decolonize the museum, representing the diverse identities and increasing needs of its patrons and its users.

The class will actively engage with the upcoming and concurrent exhibition, *Script/Re-script* at the San Diego State University Art Gallery being co-curated by Amanda Cachia and Bhavna Meta, opening on October 13, 2022 and running until December 8, 2022, where students will actively contribute to the design and access components of the exhibition, and engage with audiences through innovative and original public programming.

### **Course Objectives**

- Understand disability history, theory, and culture in relation to museum culture by reading and discussing class readings
- Understand disability arts, “disability aesthetics,” and the contexts of art-making for/by people with disabilities and artworks about disability
- Apply this knowledge to art history and contemporary art practice, curation, funding, etc. through critical writing, discussion, designing a real-life exhibition etc.
- Apply this knowledge to various class assignments, including museum-oriented accessibility projects, a Wikipedia article, article presentation, and hands-on exhibition development and programming
- Become familiar with concepts from the field of disability studies and related topics of gender, race, sexuality, colonialism, etc.

## Course Requirements

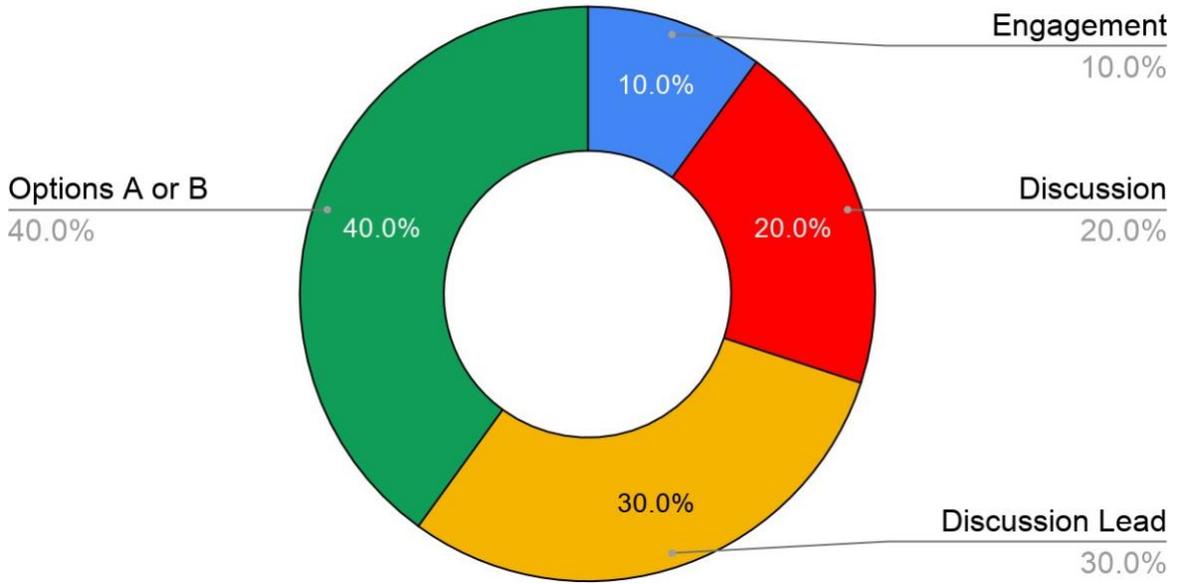
- There will be required readings for each class meeting. You are expected to complete these readings prior to class, and to come to class prepared for discussion. All readings are available on Canvas.
- There will be recurring writing assignments throughout the semester. You will therefore need access to a computer, whether personal or shared in a computer lab. Please get in touch with me about access to a computer as needed or desired. Field trips may be required.
- There are several required assignments, as noted in the course schedule below. Most importantly, there is a final research paper and an article presentation.

## Course Assessment & Grading

Your grade will be determined by multiple points of assessment, including course engagement and graded assignments. Course engagement means: attendance, completion of assignments, museum visits, office visits, discussion (in class and online), workshop attendance, and readings.

● Class Engagement	10%	
● Museum Access Analysis	20%	Due: TBD
● Audio Descriptions	20%	Due: TBD
● Labels Project	20%	Due: TBD
● Exhibition Programming	30%	Due: TBD

# Grading Breakdown



## Course Assignments

Below are descriptions of the graded course assignments.

- Project 1: Museum Access Analysis  
In this assignment, we will visit X museum in Balboa Park. Students will guide themselves through the museum and analyze how the galleries embody accessibility through their layout and design, taking detailed notes on paper or phone or tablet. We will return to class and discuss our findings as a group. Due: X.
- Project 2: Artwork Audio Description  
Using the Shape Arts [audio description guide](#), you will write two oral descriptions of the artwork for the upcoming exhibition at SDSU gallery and website (alt-text) use. Due: X.
- Project 3: Labels Project  
Each student will be assigned several objects in which they must develop multi-sensorial label copy that offers new modes for experiencing artwork. Due: X.
- Project 4: Exhibition Programming  
Develop a major public program in association with the exhibition that extends and supports the overall thesis of the exhibition and its objective to generate conversation on disability culture and design. Due: X.

## Assignment Lateness Policy

All assignments should be turned in on time. However, if you feel and/or anticipate that you might not be able to meet the deadline, please do let me know in advance (i.e., before the assignment is due). I want you to succeed rather than receive a lowered grade, and deadline accommodations may be available depending on circumstances. Please get in touch to discuss options.

## Honor Code & Classroom Community

Integrity of academic work is of utmost importance in this writing-intensive course: proper citation, footnoting, and presentation of your own ideas is required of every student. Courtesy and respect to each other is also expected: in the class, we will all be responsible for creating a hospitable, positive, and affirmative environment for learning and growth (this means, beyond generally being kind, using preferred names and pronouns of our class peers, and thinking carefully through our own privileges and biases in discussions).

## Class Accessibility & Inclusion

I am committed to every student's success and encourage you to contact me with any concerns that you may have regarding your academic work or barriers that you encounter in this course. If at any point in the semester you find that there are either structural or personal circumstances that are affecting your ability to learn -such as life stress, emotional distress, family situations, physical conditions, or how this course is setup/designed - please email me ASAP.

I utilize the teaching method and theory of [engaged pedagogy](#), which means that I understand every student is an individual with unique experiences, circumstances, and a life outside of class: I want everyone to succeed, and accordingly welcome any discussion about how I can help you achieve academic and personal goals. Let's talk!

San Diego State University also offers helpful resources to students with disabilities. If you feel that you want to work with the Disability office (or are already working with them) and wish to receive formal course accommodations, please do so, and inform me after you have done so to ensure that these accommodations are in place. For information on these accommodation services, please send inquiries to:

## Syllabus Information

This syllabus is provided to you as a cloud/online document which is downloadable/editable. Download and modify this document for legibility as needed. Each section uses meta-header tags for text readers and general document navigation.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Please find the course schedule below. All dates and topics are subject to change at the discretion of the professor. All course readings will be available on Canvas or hyperlinked in this document.

### Week 1 **Course Introduction**

Richard Sandell

Elizabeth Guffey, "The Disabling Art Museum," *Journal of Visual Culture*  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/19/arts/design/guggenheim-new-york.html?smid=em-share>

### Week 2 **Making Museums Accessible**

- Amanda Cachia, "[Talking Blind: Disability, Access and the Discursive Turn](#)," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33(3) (2013)
- Shannon Finnegan and Aimi Hamraie, "[Accessibility as a Shared Responsibility](#)," *Art in America* (Dec. 17, 2019)
- Carolyn Lazard, "[Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice](#)," *Recess Art* (2019)
- Chris Sharratt, "[Does the Art World Have a Problem with Disabled People](#)," *Frieze* (Aug. 23, 2019)
- "[8 Blind Children Take a Touch Tour of Sculpture](#)," *The New York Times* (Mar. 13, 1978)
- "[Museums and the Disabled](#)," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (1979)
- "[Accessibility and ADA Compliance](#)," *The Cleveland Museum of Art* (2020)
- "[Jennifer Justice and Alice Wong \[Discuss Visiting Museums\]](#)," *Disability Visibility Project* (May 21, 2016) (audio) (3:00)
- Shannon Finnegan, "[Accessibility](#)," *Disability Project Podcast* (Jan 10, 2020) (30:00)
- Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern, "[My Body Doesn't Oppress Me. Society Does](#)" (2017) (video)

## Further Readings

- [“Arts and the Handicapped: An Issue of Access,”](#) NEA (1975)
- *Museums Without Barriers: A New Deal For the Disabled* (1991)
- Marcy Wasilewski, "[Book Review: Arts and the Handicapped,](#)" Roundtable Reports (1976)
- Claire Voon, "[Museums are Finally Taking Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities Seriously,](#)" Artsy (Oct. 14, 2019)
- "[Design for Accessibility: A Cultural Administrator's Handbook](#)" (2003)
- Minh Nguyen, "[Liza Sylvestre's Ideal Museum Engages All the Senses - Not Just Sight,](#)" ARTnews (Sep. 3, 2019)
- Aditi Shrikant, "[How Museums Are Becoming More Sensory-Friendly For Those With Autism,](#)" Smithsonian Magazine (Jan 5., 2018)
- [“ArtLens App,”](#) The Cleveland Museum of Art (2020)
- Clara Giraud and Nicola Miles-Wildin, "[Demystifying Access: A Guide for Producers and Performance Makers](#)" (2018)

## Week 3

### Curating Disability

- Amanda Cachia, "[Reflections on Access: Disability in Curatorial Practice,](#)" Canadian Journal of Disability Studies 8(1) (2019): 99-117
- Jessica Cooley & Ann Fox, "[Disability Art, Aesthetics and Access: Creating Exhibitions in a Liberal Arts Setting,](#)" Disability Studies Quarterly (34)1 (2014)
- Petra Kupperts, "[Nothing About Us Without Us: Mounting a Disability Arts Exhibit,](#)" Disability Studies Quarterly 32(1) (2012)
- "[Canaries: Refuge in the Means,](#)" Recess Art (2016)
- Fraser, Benjamin, "[Disability Art, Visibility and the Right to the City: The Trazos Singulares \(2011\) Exhibit at Madrid's Nuevos Ministerios Metro Station,](#)" Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies Vol. 17 (2013): 245-261
- Bess Liebenson, "[Art Meant to Touch & Be Touched,](#)" *New York Times* (Oct. 16, 1988)
- "[Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying,](#)" EFA ProjectSpace Program (2017)
- Maura Reilly, "[What is Curatorial Activism?](#)" ARTnews (Nov. 7, 2017)
- Veroniiiiica, "[How to Write Alt Text and Image Descriptions for the Visually Impaired,](#)" Perkins School for the Blind (January 31, 2018)

## Further Readings

- Amanda Cachia, "[Disabling the Museum: Curator as Infrastructural Activist](#)" *Visual Art Practice*, 12(3) (2013)
- [Crippling Cyberspace: A Contemporary Virtual Art Exhibition](#) (2013)
- Amanda Cachia, "[Curating Disability Art](#)," *Akimbo* (2019)
- Aidan Moesby, "[Interrogating the \(In\)Visibility of Disabled Artists](#)" (2018)
- Chloe Crawford, "[Troubling Technology and Ableist Mentality of Medical Exoskeletons](#)," *Hyperallergic* (Jan. 1, 2020)
- Christine Mullen Kreamer, "[Defining Communities Through Exhibiting and Collecting](#)," *Museums & Communities* (1992): 367-381
- Ivan Karp, "[Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture](#)," *Museums & Communities* (1992): 1-17
- "Lions Gallery of the Senses Presents: Vito Acconci," *Wadsworth Atheneum Press Release* (May 1985) (Blackboard)
- Taraneh Fazeli, "[Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying \(In Conversation with the Canaries\)](#)," *Temporary Art Review* (May 26, 2016)
- Monica Westin, "[In Recording CripTech, Artists highlight the Vital Role of Hacking in Disability Culture](#)," *Art in America* (Feb. 19, 2020)

Week 4

### **Exhibition Design and Disability**

Guest talk with Sean Lee from Tangled Art + Disability, Toronto regarding hybrid exhibition design across physical and digital space  
Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design  
<https://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/publications/Smithsonian%20Guidelines%20for%20accessible%20design.pdf>

Week 5

### **Artists Making Work About Access**

Carmen Papalia Carolyn  
Lazard Park McArthur  
Liza Sylvestre  
Christine Sun Kim  
Emily Barker  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/24/arts/design/artists-disability-museums.html>

Week 6

### **Audio Description & Captions**

Emily Watlington  
Christine Sun Kim  
Liza Sylvestre  
Darrin Martin  
Alison O'Daniel  
Joseph Grigely

Week 7

**Tactile Tours**

Georgina KleegeCarmen  
Papalia Fayen d'Evie  
Art Beyond SightWendy  
Jacob

Week 8

**Ramps & Benches**

Shannon Finnegan  
Cassandra Hartblay  
Sara Hendren

<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/dic/universal-design-case-study-museum-seating/>

Week 9

**Technology inside/outside the museum**

Websites  
Zoom programming  
iPads, touchscreens, other innovationsSimon Dogger  
Josh Miele

## Week 10 Disability Design & Architecture

### Deaf Space

- Bess Williamson, "[Introduction: Disability, Design and Rights in the Twentieth Century.](#)" Accessible America (2019): 1-16
- Liz Jackson, "[We Are the Original Lifehackers.](#)" New York Times (May 30, 2018)
- Liz Jackson, "[Honoring the Friction of Disability.](#)" AIGA Design (2019) (video) (37:00)
- Aimi Hamraie, "[Epistemic Activism: Design Expertise as a Site of Intervention.](#)" Building Access: (2017): 131-174
- Jillian Weise, "[The Dawn of the Tryborg.](#)" New York Times (Nov. 30, 2016)
- Kevin Gotkin, "[Stair Worship: Heatherwick's Vessel.](#)" The Avery Review (Sep. 2018)
- Chancey Fleet, "[Dark Patterns in Accessibility Tech.](#)" Data & Society Podcast (June 5, 2019) (audio) (11:00 minutes)
- "[Disabled People Want Disability Design - Not Disability Dongles.](#)" CBC Radio Podcast (Nov. 8, 2019) (audio) (50:00 minutes)
- Aimi Hamraie, "[Universal Design and the Problem of Post-Disability Ideology.](#)" Design & Culture (2016):

## Further Readings

- Elizabeth Guffey, "Designing Disability," *Designing Disability* (2017): 2-12
- Cheryl Davis, "Disability and the Experience of Architecture." *Rethinking Architecture* (1987): 19-33.
- Hakim Bishara, "[Vessel Adds Elevator for People with Disabilities After Deal With US Attorney of New York](#)," *Hyperallergic* (Dec. 26, 2019)
- Sasha Blair-Goldensohn, "[New York Has a Great Subway, if You're Not in a Wheelchair](#)," *New York Times* (Mar. 29, 2017)

Week 11

### **Label design and language**

- Workshop: select an object from an online museum collection that is related to disability. Write or re-write a "didactic text" to describe that object in a way that considers disability; where disability was part of the work but had been eclipsed or ignored. If there is any pre-existing label copy, compare and expand and evolve the text to consider disability in a new way—the narrative, politics of representation, tactility. Has the work historically represented physical barriers, or has the artist given very specific instructions that hinder or impede access? If so, how to work around that? A reminder that this description is serving folks who are Blind and partially-sighted, as well as non-visual learners. As such, your approach should hold an intent of providing visual information alongside other sensorial modes of engagement

Week 12

### **Exhibition Floor Plans**

Herbert Bayer, "Aspects of Design of Exhibitions and Museums,"

*Curator: The Museum Journal*, Vol 4. Issue 3, July 1961

Surrealism experimental exhibition designs, Marcel Duchamp, *His Twine*, 1942

Digital exhibition environments

Week 13

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14 & 15

### **Student Programming at SDSU Gallery**

Please email your final papers as a Word document(.doc or .docx)

[acachia@sdsu.edu](mailto:acachia@sdsu.edu)

Thank you for the wonderful semester! 🙌





