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BLOG - AIDAN MOESBY

Creating the Climate for Change: Curating and Disability Arts in Mexico City

August 6, 2018 - by [Aidan Moesby](#)



My practice used to be wide and shallow. I did lots of different things, kept so many plates spinning I often didn't know what I was doing or where I was doing it half the time. There is always the fear that if you say no to something you'll never work again. But I knew that method of working was unsustainable in the long term, and also, on reflection, I ended up doing things that my heart wasn't fully into. I decided to take some time and reflect, ask some people for advice and think about what it was that I really wanted to do. I identified that my core practice was around conversations and that this supported all my other work – with a particular interest in Climate Change and Mental Health. From that premise I decided that if something didn't fit with this context then I wouldn't do it (unless it was a really interesting opportunity with interesting people). That's not to say I no longer have a wide practice – just not as wide and a bit deeper – and importantly for me I do a variety of things. My practice looks a a bit like this – with Conversations underpinning everything.

Researcher Writer Facilitator

Thinker Artist Curator Chair

Mental Health Consultant Panellist

Board Member of Shape Arts Aspiring Cultural Leader Equality, Diversity, Inclusion

During April I was in the far north of Norway doing a research project funded by an Artists International Development Fund Grant. I was exploring curating and doing early research for a new project around Loneliness and Presence within the context of Climate Change and Wellbeing. I received an e-mail asking me if I would be interested in going to Mexico – I originally thought it was a scam. However after a series of e-mails everything got confirmed and I was convinced it was a real offer.

At the end of June I travelled to Mexico City and was fortunate to present at a 3-day conference run by 17edu.org . This was part of a longer colloquium for those studying at the critical studies institute.

Curating Disability: Developing the Climate for Change

Disabled people, or people with impairments, are undervalued and under-represented in society and more so in the art world. We are often viewed as being broken, or needing fixed, with little to contribute. We have no, or very little, personal, professional, economic, cultural or social value or worth. I don't need or want fixed. My disability is a part of me – it informs who I am but not all of what or who I am in the same way as having glasses does – I am a sum of my experiences.

The predominant view held by a 'normative' or 'typical' mainstream it is little wonder we as disabled people have little representation in places associated with worth. At the end of last year I wrote an article '[Where are the disabled curators?](#)' outlining some of my views about their absence.

Taking this text as a foundation I will develop the discourse around the invisibility of the disabled artist to the mainstream art world and explore some of the 'barriers to visibility'. The art world is a particular ecology, understanding the relevant food chains is fundamental to being able to adapt and change to exploit the limited resources and opportunities which are available. Along with this is the hierarchy of power and agency. Disabled people generally have less power than most because of the way society is set up, it is more difficult to exert our own agency, to make out own choices about the things which affect us rather than having them made for us.

How do we become visible?

What do we need to get into the gallery?

Where does accessibility and inclusion start and finish?

What do we need to be able to make work?

Can we be accessible for all and include everyone? Do we want to?

Sometimes to get what we want we need to play the game by someone else's rules, but once in the game we can change the rules and even make our own. So how do we do that? Do we try and follow the well trodden path which already exists or do we create our own path? How do we address the issues of quality, of what is good enough and who decides. Where are the critical dialogues occurring and how do we embed them into practice?

Within the format of a 'curated conversation' we will discuss, explore, and interrogate these and other issues, hopefully with passion and good humour, related to Curating and Disability.



Aidan Moesby
Curador y artista (Gran Bretaña)

¿Están las galerías tomando la oportunidad para ser parte de esto y exhibir el trabajo de artistas llamados con "discapacidad"?

Del 28 al 30 de junio de 2018 / Biblioteca Vasconcelos

17edu.org



BIBLIOTECA VASCONCELOS

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This was followed by a workshop and discussion around making galleries accessible and also getting artists into galleries at <http://www.artelamedia.bellasartes.gob.mx>

Working with



Aidan Moesby with a projected image of Fragmenting the Codex (with Pum Dunbar) presenting at Workshop about Curating Disability Arts in a Gallery Context



Aidan Moesby standing in front of a projected image of his Periodic Table of Emotions

17edu.org and <http://www.artelameda.bellasartes.gob.mx> were amazing experiences – not just because I got to experience international organisations and talk about disability, art and curating – but because they hosted so well. If you follow my writing you know this is so important to me, and perhaps in a country like Mexico where money is in short supply, good hosting costs nothing. Before I went I was anxious, a city of 20 million plus, noise, guns, pollution, etc. But I ended up loving it. None of my fears were realised, in fact I thrived on the visceral, sensorial overload. My hosts ensured I was looked after, not just for the days at the conference but the whole time. I never felt forgotten. My access needs were catered for and I felt safe and cared about. And because everyone I worked with was so lovely, authentic and passionate about what they were doing I got to meet amazing people – as people – not just as colleagues. I am keeping my fingers crossed for a return journey. As a final pointer – I was invited because they had read my blog on DAO about curating – and this highlights the importance of writing about your practice and also nurturing personal and organisational relationships and networks.

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