Beyond Measure? Disability Art, Affect and Reimagining Visitor Experience

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ABSTRACT *Disability, mad and d/Deaf arts are motivated to transform the arts sector and beyond in ways that foreground differing embodiments. But how do we know if such arts-based interventions are actually disrupting conventional ways of experiencing and consuming art? This article presents three themes from a critical literature review relevant to curating and creating artwork meant to spur social change related to non-normative bodies. We highlight examples that push beyond standard survey measurement techniques, such as talk-back walls and guided tours by people with lived experiences. We also explore the myriad affective outcomes of art and how we might measure emotional reactions, recognizing that disability itself is imbricated in structures of feeling. We argue that such efforts must integrate concepts of access from the field of critical disability studies. Ultimately, tools for measuring audience response to politicized art must contribute to challenging and transforming these structures.*

KEYWORDS visitor experience; affect; emotion; evaluation; audience; museums

Introduction

Art institutions are increasingly required to justify their existence in light of an emphasis on evidence and measurement in funding opportunities. Measuring the worth of art and art institutions, while perhaps strategically necessary in a precarious funding climate, overlooks the idea that art is vital to our societal and personal fulfillment precisely *because* it defies measurement. While it is common to decry forms of rule that seize on quantifiable measures of success, we suggest there is discursive space for

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engaging in conversations about the impact of art that can challenge these logics.

Disability, mad and d/Deaf arts have "arrived" on the mainstream arts scene in Canada, now formally identified as a "field of practice" by the Canada Council for the Arts (2018a, 2018b). Definitions of disability, mad, and d/Deaf art practices are varied and contested. Following Jacobson and McMurchy (2010), we define disability arts as a field "in which artists with disabilities create work that expresses their identities as disabled people" (p. 1). Disability, mad, and d/Deaf art is thus inherently political and seeks to transform representations and material responses to non-normative bodies.

The narratives that surround disability, mad and d/Deaf arts communities are politically charged, and dense with a range of emotions and affects. Mainstream culture often "reads" disability – and disability arts – through a lens of pity. Alternatively, a central aim of thriving disability art communities is to disrupt and transform the arts sector in ways that foreground differing embodiments. To this end, disability artists see difference as a creative way to explode convention and imagine new futures in which disability flourishes. Drawing on affect theory and the broader literature on emotions, we advance a critical perspective here that explores what it means to *feel* disability and disability art, and how a focus on the emotional contours of disability art can challenge and invigorate attempts to measure the "outcomes" of art.

Such a perspective compels us to think about how emotions do not exist outside of our capacity to interpret them. Emotions and the affective realm should be understood through the cultural, political, economic, and social structures that give them life and imbue them with meaning. We ask: do arts institutions communicate "public feelings" (Cvetkovich, 2012) about disability and disability art that are interpreted by visitors or patrons in particular ways? Critical disability scholars have pointed out the harmful effects of the feelings attached to disabled people by non-disabled people in an ableist world, yet feelings can be shifted in their intensity depending upon the particular context or space in which they are being expressed. It then becomes difficult to make definitive claims about what constitutes "good" and "bad" emotions.[1]

In this article, we begin with a brief glimpse of the debates that have animated the study of emotions before engaging with the links between affect, emotion and disability experience. We then review methods of measuring audience responses to art, focusing on whether we can account for the affective outcomes of art, and if so, how. Many of the articles we identified on audience responses to art are from the field of visitor studies, which is defined as the "the interdisciplinary study of human experiences within informal learning environments" (Visitor Studies Association, 2020).

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[1] A good example is the feeling of shame, which was powerfully appropriated by the LGBTQI movement to mark a resistance to dominant ways of understanding LGBTQI identities (Hemmings, 2005).

We present three main themes that emerged from a critical review of the scholarship: (1) the contextual turn in the field of visitor studies, (2) ways to describe, encourage and account for visitor and audience engagement, and (3) work that explicitly explores social change through art. Our discussion gestures to the creative potential for curators and artists to "measure" audience responses to art. Our analysis of the existing literature, however, points to some of the limitations of these approaches, which typically do not account for disability and other forms of embodied difference, nor do they seek to capture the "affective atmospheres" (Anderson, 2009) that shape how diversely embodied audiences experience art. While there is growing pressure to measure the social, political, and cultural outcomes of art in ways that might demonstrate the "value" of these organizations, we argue that such efforts must integrate a robust concept of access, perhaps drawing on affect literature as one option. Tools for measuring audience responses to politicized art must contribute to challenging and ultimately transforming the social and political structures that define access in art spaces.

Theoretical Orientation: Thinking with Emotions and Affect

There are many ways to challenge the seemingly cold, impersonal metrics of measurement. We are guided here by recent theoretical developments in the study of emotion and affect as one way to think about the embodied visitor experience. The hope is that it could "move" researchers, artists, art funders and the art community to embrace the complex ways in which we experience art, not to mention the template of feelings that might structure these interactions between art and its publics. Although the terms are commonly interchanged in popular discourse, the relationship between affect, feelings and emotion is admittedly messy. Affects can be understood as intensities that are difficult to pin down because they are non-conscious experiences of bodily energy that respond to stimuli (Massumi, 1995, 2002).

Some scholars use the term "feelings" to navigate the conceptual fuzziness of perspectives that pit affects against emotions. As Cvetkovich (2012) outlines, the notion of feelings captures affect and emotions – it is "intentionally imprecise, retaining the ambiguity between feelings as embodied sensations and feelings as psychic or cognitive experiences" (p. 4). A feeling, says Shouse (2005), "is a sensation that has been checked against previous experiences and labelled. It is personal and biographical because every person has a distinct set of previous sensations from which to draw when interpreting and labelling their feelings."

"Complex moral emotions" such as compassion, disgust, fear and anger may resemble reflex emotions that are more fleeting in nature, but "appear here in more cognitively processed forms: the fear we feel about an automobile suddenly veering toward us is more automatic than the fear we feel about a hazardous waste dump down the road" (Jasper, 2006, p. 17).

Moreover, we have feelings about our feelings: we attach judgments to our ability to express certain emotions and not others (Jasper, 2006). We might feel sad, for instance, about our inability to be happy. Emotions and affects can defy efforts to study them in conventional ways. They move through worlds and attach themselves to objects, bodies, and environments.

Community can be forged through the collective sharing of feelings such that felt experience is constituted in and through "affective communities" (Hutchison, 2016). As Hutchison discusses in her work on the construction of political community in the wake of trauma, it is vital to explore the paradoxical nature of feelings that can at once lead to individual isolation but "also seep out, affecting those who surround and bear witness and, in doing so, shape political communities" (2016, p. 3). In terms of our interest in disrupting conventional ways of measuring art, we can think about how to develop tools to measure feelings as expressed by individuals but also retain the sense in which art holds the potential to spark collectively felt experiences that construct affective communities.

Thinking *with* emotion and affect challenges how we might measure the outcomes of art, and how we experience art. This does not mean we need to abandon all forms of evaluation even though emotions or affects might be difficult to capture using conventional metrics. It seems almost natural to assume that visitors' experiences in art institutions are emotional and affective ones.

A starting point for linking an interest in affect and emotions with the visitor experience is to appreciate that bringing emotions into the picture leads us to ask what factors might govern interactions between individuals, among individuals and institutional spaces, and between individuals and art objects such as paintings, art installations, or video/film. Thinking about artists as sentient, feeling actors is hardly controversial. After all, art and artistic expression are generally regarded as the communication of feelings. The next step is to imagine art consumers as feeling actors, too. While emotions and affects might not fit neatly into models for evaluating visitor experience, excluding them deprives us of obtaining a more comprehensive picture of the complex intersections of artistic practice and visitor experience.

Emotions/Affects + Critical Disability Studies

Disability experience is brimming with a range of emotions and affects, many of which have been defined by medicine, charities, and other people and institutions that are disconnected from disability politics. The history of disability movements has been characterized by a demand that disabled people themselves define their agency and personhood on their own terms. A key part of this task has focused on challenging pervasive feelings about disability, and about countering ableism and its promotion of a normative body-mind. As Goodley et al. (2018) explain, disability becomes disavowed

by normative culture in two ways: "it is rejected (because it symbolises lack) and adored (because of its association with dependency which is the human condition desired by most of us caught in the terrors of adult autonomy)" (p. 209).

Critical disability studies perspectives can also help us to think about art and its affects/effects in ways that build on this key insight about the inseparability of body/mind; it can also be useful in cementing links between art and its ability to provoke. As Duncombe (2016) reminds us, "activist art that doesn't move us leaves us standing still" (p. 31). Recognizing the ableism in this remark (a wheelchair user or person with a tremor might object to the notion of "standing still"), Duncombe nonetheless calls our attention to general expectations about art that have an activist orientation, even if one might extend this to all forms of artistic expression.[2]

Art moves us, it makes us feel something, even if sometimes as visitors we might have difficulty expressing how that happens or in articulating the sensations and feelings that course through our "bodyminds" (Clare, 2017; Price, 2015). The notion of "bodymind" is critical here in collapsing the distinction between the body and mind. Despite a general recognition that the "body" and "mind" constitute one another, there is a stubborn tendency to think about embodiment in primarily physical terms. To quote Clare (2017):

> I settled on *body-mind* in order to recognize both the inextricable relationships between our bodies and our minds and the ways in which the ideology of cure operates as if the two are distinct – the mind superior to the body, the mind defining personhood, the mind separating humans from nonhumans." (p. xvi; emphasis in original)

Picking up this thread and delving deeper into disability studies will help to build our framework for challenging conventional discourses of measurement.

Emotions and affects are relevant not only for the purposes of understanding the experience of consuming art, but for the art institution itself and how it communicates and enacts access. When disabled, mad and d/Deaf visitors frequent an art institution that has limited to no awareness of accessibility, they may experience feelings of shame, anger, and a range of other emotions that reflect the ableism embedded in society. From the perspective of nondisabled visitors who might marvel at the efforts of museums and other cultural institutions to make their spaces "accessible" to young people and children, there might be feelings of relief and joy that the museum or gallery is less daunting for them or their children. But accessibility is more than the existence of craft activities for children. Accessibility matters for visitors with disabilities of all ages, adults and children. When accessibility is imagined only in terms of making adjustments

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[2] See Allen (2009) for a discussion of the connection between AIDS activism and political resistance in post-Apartheid South Africa.

here and there without giving greater thought to questions such as who feels comfortable and welcome in a space, it tends to reproduce the idea that the gallery or museum is primarily interested in appealing to a nondisabled adult consumer or art patron. Those with accessibility needs are literally infantilized, an all too familiar (and painful) trope for disabled people, who have long lamented the tendency of nondisabled adults to treat them as children. To illustrate the sense of privilege and entitlement assumed by nondisabled, White visitors, disability artist Shannon Finnegan explained to an audience recently in Ottawa the reception to one of her installations in New York, titled the "Anti-Stairs Club Lounge." She noted that able-bodied visitors were surprised that they could not "access" the space as it was designed exclusively for disabled patrons. As Finnegan explained, the experience highlighted how access is virtually invisible and assumed for folks who move through the world with little in the way of barriers (Finnegan, 2019).

Methods

We now turn to a critical review of the literature related to measurement, outcomes, and art. A "critical review" provides more than thematic description to "include a degree of analysis and conceptual innovation" (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 93). The aim of our review was to explore, in a general way, what the current scholarly and arts practitioner literature says about how to best measure artistic outcomes and visitor experience, and following this review, we sought to bring some of this literature into conversation with ideas from affect literature. As such, we searched Art Fulltext database using a combination of the following search terms: art; activism; social change; social justice; politics and audience feedback, participation, interaction, visitor studies, and response. We conducted a secondary search focused on disability, deaf, feminism, fat justice, aging, Indigenous and art to ensure the literature reflected the scope of the larger project. We identified 38 academic articles published between 2007-2018 to review in-depth. We expected to discover more through this broad search. This dearth points to a gap in available research and commentaries in visitor studies. We do not present a comprehensive summary or exhaustive systematic review of these bodies of literature, but rather a "snapshot" of what is happening in these diverse fields. We summarize the overall content of these articles below before turning to the broader implications for those interested in foregrounding the important connections among affect, art and disability.

Theme 1 – The Contextual Turn: Making Room for Diverse Audiences

There is an established field of visitor studies that explores peoples' motivations for visiting museums and galleries and attempts to evaluate their experiences. This literature does not explicitly address street art, folk art, literature and poetry, and other relevant media, but does help orient us to how individuals interact with exhibits in large and small museums and galleries. There is a three-phase evolution in the field of visitor studies beginning with a descriptive approach that focuses on the sociodemographic characteristics of visitors, to an approach that attempts to discern motivations of visitors, to a more recent turn towards multiple aspects of context and identity (López Sintas et al., 2014). The focus on sociodemographic characteristics helped document the over-representation of privileged groups among museum visitors (López Sintas et al., 2014). The motivation literature presumes that visitor motivations could be easily documented, enumerated, and analyzed. More recently, the literature has shifted to focus on how social dimensions of the museum exhibit experiences are shaped by the visitor's identity, personal experiences, and history, termed the "contextual turn" (Dawson & Jensen, 2011). This turn pushes against what Carr (2011) describes as the "rush to classify the immediate outcomes of experience" (p. 6). We focus on examples from this shift in the visitor studies literature as it holds the most potential for considering the *feelings* of disability, mad and d/Deaf art.

López Sintas et al. (2014) analyse the "social dimension of the art museum experience holistically, that is, before, during, and after the visit" (p. 241). Using 21 qualitative interviews, they find "unaccompanied or accompanied art museum visits are not universal categories but strategies" (p. 247) and argue that "space-time framework of the museum experience extends beyond the boundaries of the museum" (p. 253). As such they suggest going beyond "measuring … reactions to particular exhibitions" (p. 255). However, something may be lost when reactions to particular exhibits are overlooked as art is inherently personal, audiences are engaging with the art, and furthermore, artists are interested in the affective responses to their work. Indeed, despite pressures from funders and a general climate that emphasizes concrete results, this analysis is an example of how the field of visitor studies deemphasizes measurement and decreases room for complexity. Importantly, this literature does not explicitly overlap with the literature on emotions and affect, but we suggest the contextual turn in the field of visitor studies makes more room to consider the affective implications of art.

In terms of alternatives to measurement, Albano (2014) draws on the idea that the visitor is a "body in movement" and suggests using "exhibition narrative" to explore visitor experiences. Exhibition narratives rely on visitor narrations situated in specific time and space of the exhibit. This approach represents a more complex way of interpreting visitor experience, allowing for greater nuance. Another example comes from Dicks (2016), who advocates that Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is useful for museum

and visitor studies. She suggests that habitus reveals value judgments that visitors make in response to the "social identities on display" (2016, p. 52). Dicks' work draws on interviews with visitors to an industrial heritage museum in Wales, and comments on how consistently visitors "related" to the exhibit and histories represented *despite* lack of shared class, gender, age, and so forth. So, while these examples suggest different ways to document the visitor experience, they can benefit from explicit engagement with the themes raised in the affect literature. Disability also enters into this literature.

Moussouri (2007) argues that work related to people with disabilities and visitor research is focused on "products rather than processes" (p. 90), and on "providing special programs and making structural modifications to buildings rather than on developing exhibitions that are accessible to people with diverse abilities" (p. 93). Work on relaxed performance and calls to improve theatre accessibility (Cira, 2018) also fits in this theme. Moussouri argues that adopting the social model of disability can help museums and researchers to fully embrace a social inclusion agenda.

Moussouri is part of the larger trend that aims to diversify museum audiences; Werner et al. (2014) also report on this trend. They advocate for an approach beyond collecting demographics, to incorporating aspects of personal identity. Drawing on examples of collecting information on race and ethnicity, they demonstrate the limitations and oversights of inflexible measures of ethnicity as well as the hesitancy of visitors to self-identify. Instead, they advocate for supplementing demographic measures with a personal identity approach. This approach centers types of identities that are emotionally significant to the individual's self-concept (e.g., family history, personal biography, interests and hobbies, national background). The personal identity approach is a possible entryway for exploring the affective implications of disability art. Across this set of articles, there is an emphasis on capturing the complex lives of individuals visiting an exhibit. The larger field of visitor studies encapsulates an important shift to the question of measurement, foregrounding complexity and personal experiences. While there are no explicit connections to affect literature, we suggest this evolution in visitor studies may make room for such an analysis.

Theme 2 – Interactions with Exhibit Material

There are a number of articles that explore different ways people interact with exhibit material and how to encourage interaction with exhibits. Generally, this work discusses physical interactions (i.e., touching museum objects), digital interactions, and spatial interactions (i.e., moving through a space). Some of this literature focuses on how to be inclusive of diverse audiences. The terms "access" and "inclusion," however, are used quite differently in a number of visitor studies articles as compared to disability studies. In visitor studies, these terms seem to refer to "public access" or "open access" and

inclusivity in a broad way, referring to a general sense of diversity or low socio-economic status rather than implying disabled identities and embodiments (Bouder-Pailler & Urbain, 2015; Gibson & Turner, 2012). In disability, mad and d/Deaf literature, the concept of "access" is an essential orientation that discusses concrete accommodations for people with various impairments, as well as a broader commitment towards transforming the entire infrastructure on which art rests.

The focus on space and movement in articles on exhibit interaction has implications for bodies that move in non-normative ways. Trondle (2014), for example, used special electronic gloves to track the way visitors move through the St. Gallen Museum of Fine Art in Switzerland. Trondle illuminates that beyond architecture, social space and the artwork itself can influence the way visitors move through a space. He argues that curators can intentionally create what he terms "space-cells," that is, highlighted artworks that are independent of architectural features and can lead visitors to "stopping moments" where they can pause and reflect. Such reflective moments could potentially be connected with discussions of affective experiences. According to Trondle, curators and artists can work to focus visitor attention in very specific ways. This study does not consider the ways non-normative bodies may move through a space. For example, someone who might seek a rest spot due to fatigue or might seek quiet in an overwhelming crowd would not necessarily demonstrate a "stopping moment" orchestrated by a curator or artist.

On the topic of inclusion, through three case studies in the United States, Silverman et al. (2012) suggest that museums should collaborate with occupational therapists to promote exhibit environments that are built around the principles of universal design, which would facilitate the interaction of people with disabilities with exhibitions. The focus on occupational therapists does not align with approaches that centre the lived experience of disabled people, but the article suggests engaging access advisors and people with learning disabilities. The *feeling* of inclusion and representation is, as disability scholars would suggest, essential to the experience of consuming and generating art. Although this article does not engage with affect literature, again, there is a potential opening for recognizing the importance of affect and emotion.

Patel et al. (2015) enter conversations in the turn towards more engaged, participation-based experiences in museums and galleries. They explore technologies that ask visitors to create their own content and allow engagement by individuals who are not physically present in the museum space. Their approach differs greatly from other work that presumes all bodies move through spaces with the same intent. They focus on an interactive installation at the Dr. Johnson House in central London about the first comprehensive English dictionary. The installation encouraged visitors to generate words and definitions, using a digital tool that displayed the responses both in the museum and online. The focus on sociality and

inclusion of those who are neither "spatially nor temporally present at any current moment" (Patel et al., 2015, p. 77) may inadvertently allow for inclusion of individuals who experience chronic pain, chemical sensitivity, or overstimulation in public spaces and other barriers to physically entering exhibit spaces. While not mentioned explicitly in the article, this resonates with open concepts of engagement.

Focusing on large-scale interactive art installations in the National Maritime Museum of London and in the Museum of London, Ntalla (2014) uses audience interviews to explore the shift to engaged museum experiences. Ntalla finds that "the use of digital installations can lead to a new conceptualization of the museum space that deals with controversial and subjective themes" (p. 113). Specifically, it brings visitors to a state of "in-between-ness" that can lend to emotional engagement and a sense of "play" (p. 113).

Boerner and Jobst (2013) conducted a large-scale quantitative study focusing on theatre audiences in Germany. The study included 2,795 visitors to 44 performances in 12 German-speaking theatres, and measured emotional, cognitive and what they term "conative" (thought-provoking impulses) responses to the performance. They found all three responses to be indicators of how audiences evaluate their visits to the theater. There are normative assumptions embedded in this study, notably the presumption that all base emotional and cognitive states are the same, but this work supports efforts at focusing on emotion in arts settings.

Finally, Dudley (2017) explores strategies of emotional *disengagement* that some visitors may use as an act of self-preservation, drawing on the example of a permanent exhibit installed at the Melbourne Museum in 2008, titled *The Mind: Enter the Labyrinth*. This exhibit explores the brain in medical, historical, and biological contexts, including featuring items that represent psychiatric restraint and treatment. The exhibit explicitly "seeks to challenge visitors' attitudes to normality" and interweaves issues of mental health and psychiatric diagnoses (Dudley, 2017, p. 193). Through 90 qualitative interviews with 172 visitors to this exhibit, Dudley found a high degree of active and subconscious emotional *disengagement* as many of the visitors themselves live with psychiatric diagnoses. This reveals a presumption the curators held that most audience members would not have lived experience of psychiatric diagnoses. Dudley advocates, "there is an ongoing need for sufficient attention to be paid to both the combined cognitive and emotional aspects of museum visiting" (2017, p. 194). This innovative perspective underscores that curators and artists cannot always orchestrate or predict the types of emotional responses exhibits will evoke – an idea we will return to in the discussion.

Within the field of visitor studies, the subset of literature that focuses on how individuals engage with exhibits highlights unique ways of encouraging engagement yet seems marginally attuned to alternative perspectives of

affective communities of disability, d/Deaf and mad art that requires us to assume different bodies and minds in the roles of curators, artists and visitors.

Theme 3 – Social Change through Art

There is recent literature that explicitly explores relationships between art and social change, and how to use art to enact social change related to difference and non-normative embodiment. Blanckenberg and McEwen's (2014) article is particularly relevant; they describe and analyze *queer & trans Art-iculations: Collaborative Art for Social Change*, an exhibit in Johannesburg designed to reduce discrimination of LGBTQI individuals, and to consider how "people understand and engage with difference" (p. 62). The article analyzes audience contributions to a "Talk-back Station" or "Comments Wall," as well as highlights the distinctive practice of hiring exhibition facilitators with lived experience to guide experiences and answer questions. Using facilitators with lived experience may limit negative emotional responses from audience members unfamiliar with politicized subject matter, and may actually generate an empathic ambiance, yet it may be emotionally draining for the individual facilitator. While the responses at the Talk-back Station were largely positive, "whether or not visitors who commented on their conscientisation carried this motivation beyond the Comments Wall cannot be determined" (p. 72).

Kinsley (2016) writes about increased attention to inclusion within museums and uses the work of Nancy Fraser to argue that increasing inclusion is a "matter of social justice." Inclusion, in this article, appears to primarily refer to people of colour and people of low socio-economic backgrounds. Like disability, mad and d/Deaf art commentators, Kinsley emphasizes the importance of diversifying not only the audience, but the producers, curators of exhibits, as well as the content of the work and general staff.

There are of course, and perhaps most predominantly, contributions about the role of art in social change from within the worlds of disability, mad and d/Deaf art. Solvang (2018), for example, describes four ways that are typically used to describe the intersections of art and disability: art therapy, outsider art, disability art, and disability aesthetics. Solvang argues that the interplay between these definitions is important and suggests using more than one discourse when analyzing disability art practice. In contrast to disruptive political art, Solvang suggests the overarching framework of "social practice art," which is "attuned to creating lasting relations and to imaging [sic] the inter-dependences we are all part of in new ways" (p. 250) as a mechanism for fostering inclusion in the art world as well as generating social change.

Carmen Papalia, a prominent Canadian disability artist who identifies as a non-visual learner, talks about "open access" as a way to enact social change without necessarily subscribing to official, bureaucratic visions of what

accessibility should look or *feel* like (2018). Papalia's notion of open access offers a stinging critique of how the term "access" is used in museum, art and visitor studies and practices in ways that erase disability experience. Papalia outlines a number of tenets of open access in an essay in *Canadian Art*, among them:

> 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.

> 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.

> 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 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.

> 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. (Papalia, 2018)

The conscious shift in language is critical for Papalia. The "blind" descriptor, he explains, does not capture how he experiences the world; instead he identifies as a "non visual learner." Even terms such as "accessibility," he adds, are problematic because they are weighed down by their association with disabled people, when accessibility is an experience that can be shared by a number of people who might not identify as disabled. Instead, in an interview with Jacqueline Bell (2016) Papalia suggests, what matters most in thinking about accessibility is agency – our ability to claim it and hold it. Papalia discusses his artistic practice, including his hour-long performance, "Blind Field Shuttle," in which participants are instructed: "close your eyes. Place your hands on the shoulders of the person in front of you. Now follow their lead." Bell adds, they "form a human chain behind the artist, and are led on an 'eyes closed' walk through the city or rural space" (2016).

Leah Sandals (2016) published an interview with Eliza Chandler, the first artistic director of the reimagined *Tangled Art + Disability* gallery and arts organization. In this interview, Chandler emphasizes that disabled people "aren't just audiences – they are artists and creators too" (as quoted in Sandals, 2016). Chandler pushes us to foster artistic development and

excellence among disabled producers rather than only expressing shock and awe that a disabled person is participating in the art world. She emphasizes the links between financial accessibility and access and like many disability, mad, and d/Deaf art commentators, calls for broad, systemic change in the arts.

Meaningful inclusion, Mashburn explains, "requires that curators not speak out of turn for those whose own voices can better tell their own story" (as quoted in Mashburn & Papalia, 2019). Curators, she adds,

> Need to: understand access in social rather than physical terms; assess any attitudinal barriers inherent in their own practice and disrupt ableism; listen to, centre and learn from those in the disability community who hold embodied forms of knowledge; and then rebuild their own intellectual rigor to be respectfully and intentionally inclusive... Arts leaders need to know what it means to disrupt ableism and be open to a radical reorientation of the field, guided by those at the margins.

Both Mashburn and Chandler show expansive approaches to art creation and consumption that set a new framework of values, and represent a unique, affective community.

The work from within disability, d/Deaf and mad art worlds provides compelling alternative worldviews on how to understand art, access, and how art can change cultural narratives about disability. This is essential "big picture work" that can educate disabled and nondisabled artists, curators and audience members. However, while the most relevant to the subject at hand, this body of scholarship is limited in offering ways of measuring or assessing the implementation of these new frameworks. The most revolutionary ideas cannot always be immediately actualized and the effects seen, but this work is taking place in a context where there are demands to measure the effects of exhibits and projects.

Discussion

The field of visitor studies is moving towards more complex ways of imagining the "visitor" that account for multiple identities and lived experiences. This complexity is reflected in the openness to new ways of measuring audience engagement with exhibits and spaces, such as remote engagement and spatial designs that direct walking flow to certain areas. Our literature review also reveals some persistent gaps in places where we might expect visitor studies to overlap with other bodies of scholarship. There was difficulty finding articles, commentaries, and empirical studies that explore relationships between art and social change. The most notable contributions to the subject come from disability, mad and d/Deaf perspectives. Disability studies works, it seems, are largely unconnected to work on measuring the outcomes of art, visitor studies, and visitor engagement. Even the articles in

visitor studies that do discuss inclusion or access rarely mention disability. We also observed the field of visitor studies has limited engagement with potentially relevant work on affect and emotions.

In stepping back from the literature, we argue for a more explicit engagement among art institutions with the affective dimensions of visitor experience in ways that appreciate the complexity of the emotional worlds we inhabit. Rather than seeking to answer whether a painting or sculpture makes you happy or sad, institutions can think about the visitor experience as moving beyond an individual reaction to this or that painting or artwork. Quite literally, museums or galleries could start by asking how visitors "feel their way" through these spaces, which can be inhospitable or unwelcome to some, and at times unpleasant. The Empathy Museum, for instance, initiated a project titled "A Mile in My Shoes," which allows visitors to "literally wear someone else's shoes while listening to their audio diary [as it] gracefully reveals the power of this complicated but crucial emotion" (Norris & Tisdale, 2017, p. 107). A disability studies perspective might ask crucial questions about the ableism embedded in the grounding frameworks in an otherwise interesting exhibition that seeks to bring visitors to put themselves in someone else's shoes quite literally.

While we naturally gravitate to how visitors experience art – whether visual work or multi-media installations – disability studies scholars and activists have been central in helping us to think about how some individuals – as visitors or as artists – experience the space itself, whether it be a gallery, museum, or artist-run centre. For disabled visitors, for instance, issues related to accessibility can provoke feelings of anger, shame, disgust, and sadness. Museums, galleries, and other art institutions are environments that invariably arouse a range of emotional responses that might resonate in different ways to particular groups. For instance, Indigenous visitors to Canadian galleries and museums were not, until recently, reflected in the images that collectively represented Canada. Similarly, the stories that together make up narratives about Canada failed to represent Black, racialized, disabled, or queer Canadians. Far from being an issue of ensuring that spaces are physically accessible, these cultural spaces communicate in a myriad of ways who belongs and who does not. Affective communities can be spaces of exclusion just as they might provide space for collective feelings to emerge. Recent attention to the woeful underrepresentation of Black artists, for instance, is part of a larger conversation about the disappearance of Black life in arts institutions in North America and beyond (Ware, 2020).

What kinds of emotions are appropriate to express in these artistic environments? Is it okay to cry, laugh, or be angry? Asking what it is appropriate to feel turns our attention to the "feeling rules" (Hochschild, 1979) expressed in these environments, and the impact they have on makers and consumers of art. In order to do so, we need to explore how feelings and emotions can be organizing sites of political agency in their own right. Attention to these rules might guide us in uncovering how certain emotions

are privileged in some spaces but discouraged in others. This is particularly so in the example of Dudley (2017), where the evaluation unexpectedly discovered emotional disengagement, suggesting that presumptions about visitor identities and attempts to guide their emotional states may be misguided.

Norris and Tisdale (2017) encourage us to "lean into the hard emotions" (p. 107), adding that art should provoke a jumble of emotions that might be difficult to disentangle:

> Our public audiences need us to help them dig into the hard emotions, even if it's scary. It's the only way we will grow and improve, together. And it's even more crucial when race, class, gender, politics, and social views create emotional polarization, where one group's emotional reaction is favored over another's. (p. 107)

They go as far as to suggest that "an exhibition topic that has little potential to evoke emotional responses in visitors is an exhibition topic that is not worth pursuing" (Norris & Tisdale, p. 103). There is a vital need to document, reflect, and consider our emotional responses to art, particularly politicized art from marginalized embodiments, and to use this documentation as a new form of institutional and exhibit evaluation.

Conclusion

Our critical review revealed that greater effort is necessary to begin to capture the effects/affects of disability, mad, and d/Deaf art. We conclude with two recommendations, even if our thoughts might be better framed as affective calls to action, or a plea to take affect and emotions seriously.

First, there is a need to carefully integrate emerging tools and concepts from visitor studies to the field of disability, mad, and d/Deaf art. Further, we should continue to experiment with and pilot creative ways of evaluation in the context of disability, mad, and d/Deaf art events and exhibits, which are often places brimming with complexity in emotional, societal and embodied senses. We do not want to dampen this complexity, but make efforts to capture it, and challenge the boundaries of what might be seen as worth measuring. Our review found that audience interviews or post-exhibit interviews are a common technique that, if designed carefully, may be useful. There were other measurement tools built into exhibit design, often in ways that complemented the exhibit itself, for example, the remote contributions to the exhibit on the history of the dictionary at the Dr. Johnson House in London (Patel et al., 2015). The Talk-back Station and the employment of museum guides with lived experience relevant to the subject matter (Blanckenberg & McEwen, 2014) are other examples of promising ideas for measuring the tangible and affective outcomes of activist art. Norris and Tisdale (2017) discuss the notion of developing an "emotional toolkit" for

curators and other leaders of art institutions that can help in designing exhibitions that take seriously the affective outcomes of their exhibitions. It should be stressed here that art institutions would be best to avoid a sole focus on "happy" affects, as if the only positive outcome of experiencing art is one of joy.

In this first recommendation, we are not advocating for narrowing the expansive goals and worldviews set forth in particular by disability, mad and d/Deaf perspectives, but rather for attempts to operationalize these goals. An easy first step, for example, would be to collect demographic information not only about the visitors to exhibits, but on the creators and curators of these exhibits, and further, perhaps using the more complex "personal identity" approach suggested by Werner et al. (2014). In doing so, artistic producers and curators can personally evaluate work to transform the art sector *while taking control over the tools of measurement*. Curators and artists themselves should design and use these complex tools in the early stages of exhibit or event planning as doing so would align with the transformative and radical values of disability, mad and d/Deaf art worlds. These evaluations may have to take place in addition to requirements of various funders, boards and other structures to whom art institutions are accountable, but we hope that in time, conducting this work will transform dominant modes of measurement. There is reason for optimism, given the gradual shift in visitor studies to encapsulate more complexity.

Second, we stress the importance of formally writing up and publishing the results of exhibit evaluations in open-access academic journals and practitioner magazines to help further develop a knowledge base about novel types of measurement, and different types of outcomes. Oftentimes, when reporting or evaluation does happen at exhibits, the reports are submitted to funders and not made public to other practitioners, artists, curators or scholars. By publishing the results, the curators will again help to maintain influence over what types of measurement are valued in the art world and be more responsible and accountable to broader publics engaged in art. Publishing may be beyond the paid duties of many producers and curators, so it may be useful to collaborate with university-affiliated researchers who can support efforts to coordinate and release the findings of evaluations.

We are situated at a critical moment in the art world. There is widespread recognition of the importance of diversity in the audience, producers, curators, and content of art; and not just a superficial form of diversity, but a politicized recognition of ongoing systematic harm against marginalized people that can be compounded by elite arts institutions. Meaningful inclusion requires a fulsome transformation of education, production, exhibition, and consumption of art. This shift is slow moving, but it is happening against a backdrop that demands that we measure and count the outcomes of individual events and exhibits, which is usually expressed in terms of audience numbers. While there is value in critiquing the world of measurement and the seeming obsession with evidence and outcomes, we

hold out hope that there are promising pathways to transform these worlds as we simultaneously transform the greater art industry. Indeed, as we work to move towards new, inclusive visions of art for the future, it is imperative that we engage a conversation that brings funders and more mainstream institutions along for the ride.

Emotions are vital to the world of art and social change, and are, unfortunately, the most difficult to track. Documenting the emotional outcomes of art exhibits and events is necessary work that demands creativity. As Duncombe (2016) suggests, we should resist the tendency to see measurement as always problematic:

> Metrics is an ugly word in the art world, one that conjures up images of insurance actuaries in grey flannel suits, sitting in cubicles in front of counting machines, busily sucking the color out of the world and burying it in a filing cabinet... This is naive. The art world is already beholden to metrics: measurements of commercial success, gauged in terms of prices fetched for a work of art, gallery representation, and attendance at and length of run for a show… Metrics already exist. The question is not Yes or No; it is Which and Whose? (p. 130)

In other words, art institutions can disrupt how we measure, in creative ways, leading the conversation rather than being consumed by it.

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