

20:00:24 Good evening, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us tonight for this exciting conversation with Carmen Papalia and Amanda Cachia.

20:00:32 I'm Maxine Proctor I use she her pronouns. I am a white woman with long blond and light brown hair. I'm wearing glasses and a black top, and sitting in my kitchen table in front of a white wall.

20:00:44 I'm the managing editor of Black Flash magazine, and I'm joining you tonight from beautiful sunny Saskatoon, which is situated on treaty six land. I would like to pay my deep gratitude to the land on which I reside, and the water that supports us all, and invite you to consider and honor the land, you are currently on.

20:01:03 I would like to pay respect to the numerous first nations, including Cree Dene Plains Cree Dakota Soto Ojibwe and the mighty nation whose traditional homeland we gather on today, ask that you take a moment to reflect and honor the histories entreaties of this land, and the land you currently occupied.

20:01:23 Tonight Carmen and Amanda will be discussing the upcoming Black Flash issue, A Temporary Collectively Held Space, which was gets edited by Carmen, as well as the exhibition Provisional Structures, Carmen Papalia with vo vo and jes sash, which was curated by Nicole Nugent and is currently installed at the McKenzie Art Gallery. Black Flash magazine has been produced and published in Saskatoon for 38 years, and is dedicated to presenting critical ideas in urgent issues about divergent artistic practices.

20:01:53 For a number of years and Nicole and I have discussed ways for Black Flash and the McKenzie to partner and share resources. So I'm so thrilled to see this project come to fruition.

20:02:03 The issue includes a thoughtful collection of writing and reflections by Angela and Thomas Bobo case later. Vanessa do Fletcher, just leave us, Lisa apprentice, suddenly Nicholson and and Mercedes a.

20:02:28 Thank all the contributors for their patience, kindness and generosity. I've learned and hopefully unlearned so many things from this process. You can pre order the issue a temporary collectively held space on the black flash website today.

20:02:34 Thank you again for joining us tonight, there will be a q and A at the end of the conversation, but please feel free to submit questions in the chat anytime.

20:02:43 Now I would like to pass the mic along to Nicole, who is the curator of education at the McKenzie art gallery to introduce Amanda and Carmen and say a few words about Carmen's recent work with the McKenzie.

20:02:58 Thank you.

20:02:58 Hello Nicole here. Thank you so much Maxine.

20:03:04 It's been such a pleasure partnering with and learning, alongside you and your team at black flash, and it has been a long time that we've been working together and thinking through ways to examine the work that we're both doing, and continuing to grow as institutions. I'm really grateful to have had you as a collaborator Maxine. Again, my name is Nicole Nugent, I've used the pronoun she and her, and if I would describe myself as a fair skinned middle aged woman with blonde curly short bob hair

and wearing a pair of cream blobby earrings that my friend Carrie made me and blush pink top, and I'm in my dining room behind me is a quilt that my friend, artists Martha Cole created, and it brings me a lot of warmth and comfort. I am very excited to be here and I'm so excited to be in this space with you all.

20:04:23 I'm curator of the provisional structures project and I'm really excited to give you a little bit of information about the entire project, it's an exhibition, public and education program.

20:04:35 And also includes the development and launch of an accessibility statement for the McKenzie Art Gallery, and you can find that statement on the wall the minute you walk into the gallery, which is located in Regina, Saskatchewan.

20:04:51 And you can also read it on the Mackenzie's website.

20:04:55 It was just over four years ago that I had the opportunity to first hear Carmen Papalia speak about his tenants of open access. I was at an art education conference at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

20:05:10 And it was really quickly after that, that our mutual colleague David Garneau had invited Carmen to visit Regina, and had reached out to me and said hey, this amazing human is coming to Regina. Have you ever heard of him? Do you want to work with him?

20:05:24 And I was like, Hmm, I definitely do. And so Carmen visited the gallery, and he conducted an eyes closed tour of one of our feature exhibitions for a small group of participants.

20:05:44 And it was literally that night that a sense of, right, I would use the words radical transformation began within my own practice as a museum educator.

20:05:57 I started to ask questions about ideas that I had long accepted and taken for granted, questioning the very core of how I understood engagement, and the relationships that I have and we have with artists community, communities, and each other, the ways in which my practice had privileged ablist experience began to show themselves and demand to be attended to.

20:06:27 And since that initial visit Carmen has visited Regina and the Mackenzie every year.

20:06:35 And he's been working with our staff and our community expanding on his work with open access challenging our institution to consider accessibility agency and care as central to our relationships, and to the work that we do at the gallery.

20:06:54 Provisional Structures is an exhibition that presents us with an opportunity to embody ideas of access and interdependence, the ways that we care for each other, and consider access and agency in public spaces as well.

20:07:13 I'd like to share a visual description of the exhibition with you all. I wish we were together gathered in the center of the space, but I'm going to do a visual description to help transport us

20:07:29 a scaffold ramp occupies the majority of the galleries 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

20:07:49 hangs a sound reducing felt lined dome that appears to be floating over top of the entire structure.

20:07:58 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.

20:08:12 Upon arriving at the center of the installation, you'll find yourself surrounded by 11 freestanding mirrored columns in the center of the columns just under 200 sandbags are assembled into curved benches, for you to rest and gather.

20:08:31 Each printed with the words, open access, while seated on the sandbag benches.

20:08:39 You can listen to an audio piece about trauma informed care and communities by artist vo vo.

20:08:46 And this recording was a keynote presentation that vo gave for the Portland Disability Justice collective online conference in 2020.

20:09:06 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 and running up the wall inside the left of the gallery entrance is an artwork by artist jes sach titled take all the time you need. Over 1300 small brass plate plated metal plaques each reading, I need a minute, are installed in columns 10 feet high and five feet wide, resembling a donor wall.

20:09:40 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.

20:09:57 And that is the exhibition, and I hope to see you all there. And I'm very excited to have the opportunity to introduce Carmen and Amanda.

20:10:08 I first met Dr Amanda Cachia when she began her work at the Dunlop Art Gallery here in Regina. It's been quite a few years since then.

20:10:18 But I was immediately inspired by her curatorial work, and her ideas around art engagement and education and galleries.

20:10:29 Now Amanda works as an independent curator, and she's from Sydney Australia.

20:10:34 Her research focuses on modern and contemporary art curatorial studies and activism, exhibition design and access, de-colonizing the museum, and the politics of embodied disability language and visual culture.

20:10:54 I cannot wait to read these. She's currently working on two book projects, a monograph based on her dissertation, called disability art agency participation and the revision of the senses, and the edited volume curating access disability or activism and creative accommodation.

20:11:16 Welcome Amanda.

20:11:18 And now I'll introduce Carmen Papalia, I'm very pleased to introduce Carmen, as a collaborator, and also as a friend and words fall short when I think about how to describe our process of working together, and what it's meant to my professional practice

20:11:37 and to me personally, Carmen exudes an open spirit of curiosity and collaboration, while at the same time he stands firm in his commitment to accessibility through his practice.

20:11:55 He is an educator, a learner, a collaborator, a supporter, a caregiver, an innovator, and a creator. He's received many awards and his work has been featured at the Museum of Modern Art, at the Guggenheim Museum, Tate Liverpool, the Whitney Museum of Art

20:12:14 of American Art. The vamp center for arts and creativity gallery gas Shea, and many others, and I'm so grateful to have this opportunity to hear from Carmen, and, and, Amanda, and I'll now pass the mic over to both of you. Thank you so much. Check.

20:12:41 Welcome. Hello everyone.

20:12:43 Carmen, do you want to go first or I could go first. Thank you so much, Nicole I was, I was like, just.

20:12:58 I didn't want to hear too much more about my myself but thank you for that lovely introduction.

20:13:00 I'm here in my corner of my bedroom. I'll just say I use he in his pronouns.

20:13:07 I am zooming in from the stolen lands of the musk Wham Squamish and slay what to the people.

20:13:15 And I'll give a visual description.

20:13:18 I have olive skin and black hair, I have a beard. Right now, I am wearing a orange brick colored button shirt with black buttons and two pockets on each side.

20:13:35 Yeah, My sleeves are kind of rolled up a couple times. And I'm wearing all of colored pants.

20:13:43 And I have a leather flat cap that's brown on and over the year headphones over that. And you might be able to see part of my hat collection in the background.

20:13:57 And that's me check.

20:14:03 Okay, I want to do my land acknowledgement I want to acknowledge that I live in Oceanside, California, which is the traditional territory of Alyssa new people of the La Jolla, Paula Palma, but Chang the Rincon and suburb of bands.

20:14:23 I, my pronouns are she her.

20:14:27 And my visual description I'm a white woman with brown curly hair it's tied up on top of my head today.

20:14:34 I'm wearing black framed rimmed glasses.

20:14:39 And I have brown eyes I'm wearing a T shirt, that is purple and pink tie dye sitting in my bedroom, because it's quiet up here without my two and a half year old.

20:14:52 Although you may hear her at some stage.

20:14:56 And behind me is a window that is closed with white shutters, and to one side of me is my tree, which I find to be very relaxing and there's a white pillow behind me on my chair as well.

20:15:10 So Carmen, how should we begin? Do you have anything like to start off with? First, I want to start off by congratulating you on yet another amazing project, and it's good, it kind of more meaningful to me, given that it's in Regina, which is where I feel like I cut my teeth as a curator and a gallery director and I so enjoyed my time there by the way.

20:15:32 It was a wonderful experience and I'm still sad that I left actually.

20:15:39 To this day, So I'm really, really, really happy that the McKenzie Art Gallery have brought you on board.

20:15:46 Because you're one of the best, and one of my favorite artists. So tell me what it's meant to you to have this project and to also collaborate with Maxine Black Flash and how you think that this entire project fits into your trajectory as an artist.

20:16:06 Yeah, I want to thank, Maxine also and Black Flash for just this opportunity and, yeah, it did come out of my work with the McKenzie over the last few years, this opportunity to edit this issue, and I you know I think my collaboration with the McKenzie has been just one of the more like kind of ideal experiences and being called into like work with an institution around accessibility since like my kind of approach to accessibility and just the way I understand it is more of like it's an ongoing process

20:16:48 Yeah, like you to have ongoing relationships with communities, and you know it's it's not a. It's the checklist is insufficient. It's, it's more about the, you know, 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, you know, supporting people to have agency or are alienating them so the McKenzie, was just this, you know, working with Nicole, especially and through David's introduction.

20:17:32 I just, I think it was just this great opportunity to not just like, you know, jump in and work with, like, you know, staff.

20:17:45 You know, maybe for a couple days and then leave like I know I never liked those, those opportunities really because it doesn't really allow us to get into the conversation, and really consider these practices of accessibility deeply and and I think in general, a lot of institutions, since they are colonial institutions with like sort of ablest assumptions, at the root.

20:18:15 They need to kind of go through a fair bit of unlearning when it comes to like these biases and barriers of ableism so yeah like I, I guess, you know, over the last few years we've really been building on this conversation about accessibility, leading to the you know the launch of this show, as well as the you know the accessibility statement that Nicole mentioned, and.

20:18:42 And really, you know, I, and then with this issue as well as I think it's, it was an effort to, like, extend some of those conversations and really just like bring in a group of friends that I thought could, you know, help, help me define what accessibility.

20:19:04 beyond an accommodation is and, and I think that's very much the spirit of the group that has pulled together in this issue, who are each approaching accessibility and just this topic from each of their positions.

20:19:21 And, yeah, some of which, like our long longtime friends that you know I met, even before I really started thinking of myself as an artist and, you know, became kind of, you can come connected to, to disability community.

20:19:54 And I started a magazine actually with my college friends at the time and we just did it as a way to, you know, kind of publish our friends and people we you know whose work we appreciate it and then of course to have a lunch where we could get bands to play music and have a party.

20:20:15 And so this is my first my first opportunity to edit a magazine since I'd say like, maybe 2009, which is nice. It was a good experience.

20:20:27 When I actually I know that folks are going to be able to see the issue obviously but maybe you could walk us through the issue a little bit and, you know, tell us about the different contributors and how the compensations like how everyone's contributing to the world three theme and compensation.

20:20:48 Yeah. Each piece is a very, kind of like I don't know like comes out of a particular experience that I iPad or a connection that iPad but with someone who's contributing.

20:21:02 And I don't know where to start, I guess I'll start by saying that, um, yeah like with the interview actually with K Slater, interviewing q Lawrence.

20:21:17 So, this was a piece about the anti made legislation, so that passed this legislation for medical assistance and dying, where the guidelines were brought in.

20:21:33 So, anyone with a disability diagnosis could be you know qualify for be recommended medical assistance and dying to sort of alleviate their condition or provide them relief so this was a really kind of devastating.

20:21:53 I think for many people but there was just this amazing kind of moment of solidarity and kind of this movement in opposition to this bill instigated by Katherine Tracy and Gabrielle Peters and their co-conspirators including key Lawrence, and who is based in BC, and who was really working the behind the scenes kind of like hosting of the virtual space, and they ran this like this live stream, which was like a digital like a filibuster a disability filibuster in opposition to Bill C seven.

20:22:34 The medical assistance and dying act and. And so, case later interviews q about that process, and in not only like organizing that space, and what it meant to provide access.

20:22:51 You know, for attendees on for these like long 24 hour long, streams, but also what this movement meant in terms of like this consciousness around an awareness within our community of sort of the harm of the medical system and in how, you know, this legislation was.

20:23:19 Yeah, it's threatened to two people in the disability community.

20:23:25 And, yeah, that's one of the main like instigators Gabrielle Peters who is a BC resident as well.

20:23:33 Really Gabrielle's experience was centered, a lot in this in this movement, and she has a site called dignity denied, and really was sharing her own experiences someone who's poor on income assistance, a person with a disability, and how this this legislation threatened her life, and really just was open about medical ablism and, you know, at a point in time so after the bill. the bill passed.

20:24:07 You know, there was a stream that when they did called the disability filibuster 2.0 and it's still available on online and I'd recommend anyone. Check it out, said disability filibuster.ca, and.

20:24:23 And there was a statement by Gabrielle read on that stream, the two point O stream, and it was just this.

20:24:31 Yeah, she, she was basically expressing that the medical system is harmful to us as disabled people and it wants to erase us and it wants to, you know, and our lives as a way to provide care I guess or some compassion to us, which is, it was just a such

20:24:50 a backwards idea.

20:24:53 And, and I really resonated with that idea that the medical system is harmful.

20:25:00 And, you know, I, I've lived with a complex.

20:25:04 Chronic and episodic pain condition since childhood and I spent a lot of time in hospital and I still do.

20:25:11 And I hold a lot of medical trauma from those experiences, and you know none, you know, and it wasn't until I found disability community, and was connecting with other people who identified, you know, as sick or chronically ill or, or disabled that I

20:25:28 was really able to, you know, you know, connect with my own, or even realize that I had so much fear of the, of the medical system and and you know I've stayed away in time, at times, for years.

20:25:48 You know, for two and a half years there was a period of time where I wouldn't go to the hospital even when I was in emergency situation and I have a condition that could easily lead me in intensive care and and cause like damage to my organs and, and

20:26:03 bones as well and have like quite some complications from that as well but I wasn't until like I met other disabled people in these disability led spaces, many of which, you know, we are dedicated to these the principles of Disability Justice, that I

20:26:23 that I was able to recognize that that trauma in myself and, and how how that you know just being relying on medical services and those those power dynamics within that space.

20:26:38 And you know how that that the the medical model of disability is imprinted on all of our institutions, you know.

20:26:46 And so I think the the filibuster actually was this moment where these, like, you know, people were recognizing that there's like a lot of us a disabled people around and we are we really need to take our care into our own hands.

20:27:04 And, and, you know, this is the time of pandemic where there's like, you know, triage thing where, you know, certain people are are being prioritized within ICU and certain people aren't, and you know this, I think, I think I'm an equally impact impacts

20:27:23 the people with disabilities who, you know, are, I think the most vulnerable. At this time, and and so the the filibuster was really this time of like just finding a sense of, like, like, just.

20:27:44 It was it, I think it.

20:27:47 It was really moving for me because I recognize that a lot of people were, you know, feeling isolated and then feeling this connection through that. That moment, and it's actually empowering for me.

20:28:01 And I've actually made connections with people since that you know both around this anti made issue, but also just around.

20:28:12 You know our various organizing and advocacy and. And I think one, one thing that that.

20:28:18 I mean a lot of the issues that a kid did this, this interview, but I think it gets that you know there's other pieces in the, the issue to like the pages from vo vo's trauma, graphic novel.

20:28:34 So vo is a fiber artist from Oregon, and who has this practice. I mean, you know, educating around the principles of trauma informed care and Disability Justice and yeah I just think those work really helped me understand.

20:28:55 You know what I was you know what my own trauma and how it manifests in my life, but also like how, how, you know, I've been trying to describe accessibility that goes beyond compliance level measures for a long time, and I think hearing those approach

20:29:21 to, you know, Disability Justice through trauma informed care really just gave me this great yeah just way really advanced my thinking, I guess, in terms of the ways I was thinking about accessibility as, you know, being something that, that we can achieve

20:29:30 through relationships, and that really isn't something that, you know, happens through policy or legislation through compliance.

20:29:40 But then there's yeah lots of beautiful, writing to creative writing in the, in the piece by poem by friends successfully Nicholson and Mercedes paying for their time working on farm called Emma's acres here in BC, which is where they worked through

20:30:01 the pandemic and I think they're still spending time there, and it's a farm where people who are formerly incarcerated work.

20:30:11 So they talk about the restorative nature of just ending time in that space with other people and.

20:30:20 And then, you know, I sorry I've been rambling on here, Amanda.

20:30:28 think that it's really important work that you're doing with your colleagues in the issue, and in your exhibition too and that maybe folks will feel less inhibited to share their own personal stories with medical ablism.

20:30:52 And, you know, talking about trauma care. And so maybe that's one of the goals of the issue and your exhibition is to be able to make space for those narratives, and those stories so I guess I was kind of curious if you had any, you know, other motivating



20:31:09 factors and it is I think it is a mode of activism to, in a sense, I mean, I just want to expand people's perceptions of what accessibility can be like I that's what I've tried to do with my work since I started making work.

20:31:26 You know in 2009.

20:31:32 And, you know, I'll describe one of my performances that really gets at what I mean.

20:31:38 And so I actually, you know, one I don't call myself, I don't use words like blind or visually impaired to describe myself because I think those terms privilege visual experience so I call myself a non visual artists.

20:31:53 I use a detection cane but I am. I don't use the typical white and red cane like the typical white teen, I actually, it's a graph I came that I use that I peeled off the tape off of so it's black with a wooden handle.

20:32:08 And so, 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.

20:32:20 So, I started this series of performances where I replaced my cane with different things that I can use to navigate the city or unfamiliar spaces and in one of my performances mobility device I replace my cane with a marching band and then the marching

20:32:36 band serves as my navigation system in an unfamiliar place so I'm really, you know, instead of using this institutional signifier I'm making an agreement with a group of people that are supporting me around my terms, and you know that's something that I've lacked I think in the medical in medicalizing settings like I've only think I found agency, I think through in community with other disabled people to be able to self defined and.

20:33:09 Yeah, and we're and reclaim this sense of self the way that I understand myself and so, you know, I think I've had to be an advocate for myself since I was young, since, you know, the first time experience the failures of the medical system and.

20:33:26 And it's through our practice that I've been able to like build, you know, these frameworks where I can you know kind of propose something beyond you know the three predetermine options that you're often you know you provided.

20:33:43 And for me, like in the museum context that's usually like a, maybe an audio tour that was recorded in the 70s that sounds really bad, or a touch tour that where I can touch things that are, you know, kind of, referring to things that are meant to be seen, that you can't touch.

20:34:05 And these are kind of like this is, this is the, these are the conventions of museum accessibility and I really think of those as a container for our participation as disabled people there, there, you know, they really frame the way that we are understood in relation to the museum so you know I think you know it, we're mostly as disabled people understood as attendees.

20:34:29 Maybe if there isn't accessible offering that we want and we actually you know are interested in, we can show up, but we aren't often understood as present, you know, we don't have the opportunity we have, we're super under represented within cultural institutions disabled people are and, you know, and I think so.

20:34:54 I think if you look at the container for our participation just is. Yeah, it was one that was created, largely by non disabled people sometimes in the service of people with disabilities but without their consultation, and it hasn't really strayed too far from that, since the beginning of education departments so like I offered education programs or initiatives and. And so, yeah, I really wanted to just talk about accessibility as we do within the disability community and disability culture as something that is dynamic and something that, you know, grows from the grassroots and isn't imposed from the top down, it's in a community. It's a community agreement that evolves over time.

20:35:45 And, and I think that is, is what we should be trying to achieve. And I think we should as disabled people. We need to be reclaiming that space of accessibility and defining it around our terms, and, you know, I think the strict guidelines and maybe the like the narrow set of guidelines for accessibility there, you know, this is an imprint of the medical system, you know this this.

20:36:18 Yeah, this institution that where we are, you know, they give us our diagnoses and like they, you know, give us this path to follow, and you know these their penalties.

20:36:34 In, you know, if you don't follow that path and I think it works very similarly, you know, within that the way that we advance within other institutions very similar as disabled people so I really think now, you know, since the pandemic and the uprising for black lives that like disability

20:36:54 Justice is actually this great framework to help us to guide us in the ways that we can actually.

20:37:04 Yeah, like crypt the museum. And these spaces and radically re envision them around our, our demands and desires and while you know centering the.

20:37:17 I think folks who are the most marginalized among us. Yeah, actually can come in, I think for clarification maybe it would be good to explain for folks at home, maybe the differences between disability rights and Disability Justice.

20:37:35 Hmm, yeah so disability rights you know that's a form of organizing the history that led to you know things like the Americans with Disabilities Act and you know where people were just fighting for a like these, this legislation that would provide them like a some kind of, you know, access freedoms, you know, rights.

20:37:59 But I think Disability Justice is a departure from rights based organizing and it recognizes that some people, people, especially people are black conditions and people of color have, you know, a little political power.

20:38:13 So, you know, these systems to make change and to, you know, inform legislation or that, you know, they don't have representation.

20:38:25 With within those processes and they can't, you know affect change in that way so Disability Justice emerged out of the, you know, it was a collective names, since invalid in 2005, involving, you know, people like Patty burn.

20:38:46 Stacey Melbourne.

20:38:48 Mia Mingus Leroy more Ellis Juan, these people who really kind of were instrumental to putting forward a new set of guidelines and and this set of guidelines that kind of recognizes that forms

of oppression, like, you know, racism, sexism queer and transphobia, colonialism, they're all intertwined with and reinforce able ism.

20:39:21 So it's, I think, you know, and I think it was the aim of Disability Justice is to really build capacity for care, that, you know, people lack.

20:39:35 And, and, on account of like good this governmental failure and medical liberalism and policing as well. It's about building that capacity, so we don't have to rely on the state, which is, you know, or cursor.

20:39:58 we can build safety and capacity for care within our own communities where that that knowledge around. You know what people need and how to provide them exists, and, and, and, you know, I think, I think Disability Justice is just, yeah, it needs to be our new standard for how we think about accessibility.

20:40:15 And, and how we understand the lives of people who are disabled.

20:40:21 And, yeah, it's it centers bypass disability experiences, it's about cross movement solidarity and interdependence, you know, and one of the lines in the open access statement that I wrote in 2015 is interdependence is central to the radical restructuring of power.

20:40:51 You know this, these ideas are alive in the principles of Disability Justice and yeah so I really have been you know revisiting those principles since the pandemic.

20:41:03 And also, you know, the principles of trauma informed care as well, which I think you know or have been really instructive it at this time for me and many people.

20:41:14 That's great. Thanks for clarifying that comment. I did also want to just expand on you know the interview that you and I had in that published in the issue.

20:41:24 There was a question that I had asked you, and you've mentioned it a few times now, as well and you know compensation today but about you and I have known each other for 10 years now.

20:41:36 And I feel as, you know, in the beginning, like 10 years back, we didn't have the kind of disability community arts community that we have now and I've just seen such a huge shift and change and evolution of disability arts and I guess I just wanted to

20:41:55 have you elaborate a little bit on how you think that's evolved, it just feels to me at least. So, more, much more active like this just more producers as more artists out there making work and who are seemingly very bold and very unashamed and very proud to be able to express their, Their traumas, their issues with the medical system. There, you know, institutional critique, it's there's just so much really great work happening and I feel like it was more stigmatized 10 years ago as you know as a curator

20:42:35 I had artists that were afraid of using the D word, you know, disability, or who didn't want to be boxed into certain categories. And now that seems like that's really, really changing a lot, so I was wondering what your thoughts were on that.

20:42:50 Well, I think it's because of the work of, you know, people dedicated to death. Disability Justice as it was introduced by its originators, you know, so it's about the fact that we have these places where

we can go where can our experiences experiences can be affirmed and we can meet other people who are approaching accessibility on their terms and care on their terms and where. Yeah, like we, you know, back when we met, have to say like you, you introduced me to some of my closest friends and mentors within the disability movement and, you know, when I didn't really understand what my connection to that group was I put it. I had only read about some of these people and you know I I yeah I really didn't have like connections within disability arts community until 2010, you know in Portland when I was there, setting or in social practice. And then it really kind of.

20:43:55 Yeah, it was a huge moment for me when I met you, Amanda because you kind of help connect me to this critical discourse, and this like lineage for, you know, of, of activism that an art that my work was connected to, and I could understand myself that way, but at the time I remember this frustration with, like, why aren't we receiving recognition for this work or like I mean I've had many terrible experiences with our institutions like for back then and I was still learning how to advocate for myself.

20:44:33 Within those without, you know, within those exchanges with these institutions.

20:44:40 But yeah like back then I was trying to figure out like how do you break through the wall like I was, I was always entering the institution from the education department which was great.

20:44:49 And, you know, many of the opportunities I got were because, you know, someone in that was maybe an access coordinator had heard about my work and you know wanted to bring me into to you know as part of their educational program but it was able to.

20:45:06 But I really was trying, I really felt like the that wall between education and curatorial at the time. And, you know, I think, I think things have changed now, and I think my sense is now is that like a lot of institutions want to work with disabled performances too.

20:45:26 artists. But, you know, the question is can they host them and do artists actually feel welcome and like they're there, you know, you know the folks who are hosting them can they can, they care for them and support them.

20:45:45 You know in the ways that they need to be supported.

20:45:48 Do they understand disability as a, as you know, a political identity.

20:45:55 Do they understand what ablism is and so I think for artists now you know we have so many online spaces where we can gather we can be affirmed in our experiences we, you know, something like Alice Huang's Disability Visibility site, you know that's a place where, you know, I mean just, if I can go to a site, and like the images are described in the descriptions, hold equal weight to the visual material that for me, there's like, the less labor of translation.

20:46:31 And I feel, I feel welcome and so you know we have more of these spaces where we can go to be supported, and where people can say hey I you know I resonate with what you're saying about institutions and, and, and we can connect and make work and you know I think still like there's this this inequality, when it comes to like the access that we have to, to these platforms these cultural platforms, and I actually don't think they are many are yeah like even able to host us meaningfully and or have that capacity to even host a show say about like a, like a survey exhibition about disability art or disability activism, these things, I think, you know require disabled artists curators cultural workers, you know to

be centered and to be invited in and for the institutions to dedicate time space and resources to to a disability art, and yeah and for us to like be special supported in our world building.

20:47:50 Because, you know, I just, I just think our participation has been so limited within these spaces and now people are just finding each other, and being like we might not, you know, it's like it's like what I was talking about with Disability Justice, we might not need the institutions.

20:48:08 They, they, they probably need us more than we need them.

20:48:15 I like, I like that very much I agree with you. And I will say that I think you know you've also mentioned the pandemic that how the pandemic has, you know disproportionately affected disabled folks but also how the pandemic has forced everyone to become disabled in some way using voice of grief please words. And now that we're everyone's finding like reaping the benefits of online access and I guess the question remains will this continue.

20:48:42 When things sort of returned to face to face reality and what you know how will things shift for disabled folks. So, I guess we'll have to wait and see.

20:48:51 But we do want to wrap up because we want to make time for questions and answers so we will turn it over to, to all of you out there, too, so that common I welcome, welcome your questions.

20:49:06 Awesome. Thank you so much.

20:49:09 Thank you so much to Carmen and Amanda for this incredible candid and informative conversation. Thank you, Nicole for your lovely words at the beginning, and I just wanted to give a quick thank you to DNA and Scott and the Collective Broadcast team for making this event possible. And now we'll go into the q and a.

20:49:28 And also just reminder for those joining us tonight, please submit your questions through the chat box.

20:49:34 We already have a couple of questions ready.

20:49:38 First of all, what were some of the points of unlearning that you Carmen would feel comfortable sharing in your work with the McKenzie, and on this project with black flash.

20:49:50 Well, I think, you know, there's always a degree of and learning when it comes to addressing accessibility in the museum when there's not that Disability Justice focus or common reference so you know we were, I think, you know, over the years that I've been working with the McKenzie, you know I've been able to share some of the work of my peers and you know this, I think just really gives you a fuller understanding of, yeah, what a body can be, but then what accessibility can be as well as a result and so yeah we spent a lot of time looking at texts, like that, you know, the principles of Disability Justice.

20:50:38 This text by Elwood Jimmy and Vanessa Andreotti called bricks and threads is about from this book, their book towards braiding, which is about indigenous and colonial organizing strategies.

20:50:52 We looked at the ideas of creeping, and in dwelling with this ability and idea, you know, a piece by the Allies allies at Chandler on those topics.

20:51:07 And also, you know, ideas by pieces by Nick Walker on neuro clearing and neuro cosmopolitanism as well. So really thinking of disability and disability experience as a point of departure, and like, and maybe like revealing the, the, the radical possibilities of what as a light, as, as Eliza Chandler says dwelling with this ability. And I think that's a very different for paradigm than the usual kind of accessible, you know, offering which is kind of like this way to retrofit accessibility it's like a temporary bridge to participation in a system that wasn't built with the recipient in mind.

20:51:58 So it's not about really like assimilating disability or reducing.

20:52:03 It's actually about, you know, because like usually this, I would say like we would most accessibility programs, you know the ideas that will help you like reintegrate into a dominant culture that is not disabled.

20:52:21 I think this is this a new idea for people.

20:52:26 You know especially like when we have one department in the museum that is like kind of dedicated to accessibility to understand. Accessibility is something that is about, you know, everybody it's a shared commitment across departments and levels of management, it requires disability culture to be centered and. And that's, that's a radical. I think transformation of the institution when we start to do that, and we start to re envision the institution.

20:52:59 The museum around the demands and desires of the disabled body.

20:53:12 Awesome, thank you so much for that Carmen. I have another question quickly too.

20:53:19 They were wondering if Carmen could talk a little bit more on the project, more on his marching band navigation device project.

20:53:27 Yeah, for sure. So, I, so this this project it emerged in 2013. When I was living in Portland at the time and I was talking to my best friend result Medina who we always joke and have these funny conversations and we just started talking one day about the things that I could replace my cane with and landed on this idea of replacing my cane with a marching band.

20:53:59 And so it was months later I met John CX at the Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana, California and I told him about this conversation. And I think it was a week later that he emailed me and said okay well I have like five marching bands for you to talk to that want to work with you and I was like okay let you know that I this is going to happen and. And so I met these bands.

20:54:28 High School in Santa Ana, and this was my first performance of mobility device through the Grand Central Art Center in 2013 and then, yeah, since then I performed it on the Highline in 2019 with the hungry March band, which there they kind of advertise themselves as like we play any gig, so I was like, what this gig and.

20:54:59 And then I went to New York to practice with them over a couple years and I would just meet in this rehearsal space in Williamsburg, and just kind of go through these various scenarios of like what I might encounter when I'm on a walk and, and then develop these kind of, you know, protocols for how to address things in these various scenarios. So, we practice and rehearsal space and then we brought the operation outside and into this surrounding neighborhood and until we kind of could work as a single organism, and you know that's kind of, and I'm actually plans to perform mobility device in

Vancouver. And I think it's like the week after Labor Day. And, and it's with the carnival band here in Vancouver which plays out of in rehearses in as seniors Lounge at

20:55:54 Virginia Community Center here. So yeah, this is super fun project it's like, I love watching the marching band.

20:56:06 And, yeah, it's kind of, I would say one of the works, one of my projects that I think really embodies the principles of open access as I described them is mobility device, where I'm making an agreement with this group of people, and, and, you know, accessibility is this just exchange that evolves, based on the situation and, yeah, the roles are really fluid to like, I, I remember rehearsing actually on the eyeline the day before, actual performance, and the typical tuba player actually like missed the step and I almost like trip down a few stairs and the tuba player stop playing and grabbed me and I think that's exactly what this project is about you know like you're making this negotiation, like that it's my support network, and at that point the musician, you know, knew that he could help me.

20:57:12 If he reached out and and grabbed me and, and actually really appreciated that and it's not like someone I didn't know like I had this intimacy with that group and I was vulnerable with them around, you know my own access needs and we got to know each other over the years and, and, yeah and so I thought that was a very caring gesture actually and, you know, I don't want to be grabbed by anybody like just when I'm actually find it really annoying when people want to offer help that I don't need but in that context I was, I was lending, my character this group.

20:57:50 So, yeah, it ended up working quite well.

20:57:59 Great.

20:58:01 Okay, so I'm just going to continue asking you questions if you don't mind, Amanda and Carmen.

20:58:12 Okay, so I have one from another one and it says hi Amanda and Carmen thank you for being here I'd love to hear from you both about your thoughts on how we move away from thinking in monoliths us versus them why disabled folks not being culpable latching on to institutions and cultivate interpersonal Disability Justice, how do you approach being accountable to the people you work with, with everything happening in Canada right now.

20:58:40 Great question.

20:58:44 Amanda Do you want to get respond first because I feel like I've been talking a lot.

20:58:53 So, I'm sure I'm happy, I'm happy to do that but I want to say that I acknowledge that I am aware of what's been happening in Canada with the residential schools and it's devastating and.

20:59:06 But I can't speak from a position of, you know, working within that context because I'm hearing California.

20:59:13 But I have spent time living and working and in discussion one, so I am so familiar with some of the issues happening over there. But in the meantime, just in terms of, you know, my entire practice as a curator and art historian, is, you know, trying to talk to institutions and rethink through a disability lens and so often when I'm actually invited to these days I've been invited to speak to staff in museums quite

frequently, and they all want to know, you know how they can bring in a creative, what I like to call creative access approach.

20:59:57 So that, that idea, which I'm, that's one of the books that Nicole mentioned that I'm working on the idea of that is to simply think of access less as a chore, or as like some kind of legal mandate and think of it more creatively and that's what I would,

21:00:16 how I would answer your question, because you can work within institutions like collaboratively where you're thinking of access as a more stimulating and creative process rather than something kind of boring, like some people have said, we like the money for that so let's just dismiss it.

21:00:36 And obviously common has developed, like, a really complex and really thoughtful way of thinking about access as well within his own practice and in his own methods of consultation with institutions within my book I've actually started working on reading through the chapters submissions which are really so great and a lot of people are sort of saying that unfortunately museums have a very blessed.

21:01:06 Like medical model approach to access. As in, oh we have to provide audio description in order to fix the you know the problem of not being able to access the material visually.

21:01:18 So maybe we need to think of like moving away from that medical model within museums and think of creative access but also how you know maybe having a lack of vision or a lack of hearing actually provides generative new avenues to explore at and what are they so I'm really excited by those possibilities. But I think, you know, having what common has done with the McKinsey as like in this work of consultation over the last four years, I think that's the also the answer to your question, so that it has to be a longtime relationship so that the museum really has time.

21:02:00 Museums need time. They need time to learn and to grow and to build trusting relationships with community so that they can change over time. So, artists are a lot faster at adapting then museums though.

21:02:16 So I hope that's a response to the question.

21:02:21 And Linda community context to like, I think this is why Disability Justice is a great guide for this kind of work that needs to happen right now.

21:02:32 It really is about embracing the intersections of experience so like we're not just disable the weird disable them, you know, whatever other identity D position you hold and and I think you know Disability Justice to like it prioritizes, you know, bypass disability experiences and and I think you know we can't not do that right now, and we cannot center, black and indigenous people of color who are disabled in this work around accessibility and and I say, you know, like I think about these days I'm thinking about how do we set a new cultural standard for accessibility.

21:03:17 You know, and I'm usually talking to institutions about this, about like how do how does a museum setting you know how did they adopt a new cultural standard or me to cultural standards for accessibility, But I think these cultural standards already exist in disability lead spaces, especially spaces dedicated to Disability Justice, and there are a few of them like I mean I think, like, what, Amanda was asking me earlier today, just distinguish Disability Justice from disability rights.



21:03:46 It's because Disability Justice is misused a lot just me and you know any sort of disability rights or effort towards rights or advocacy or whatever, but it really is a specific thing and you know I would point to organizations like the disability

21:04:01 Justice Network of Ontario, great organization who, you know, I really, I think is enlivening the principles of Disability Justice with their work, and also the Portland Disability Justice collective as well.

21:04:20 And, and, you know, since invalid and of course, and the Disability Justice Culture Club as well. And these spaces that I, you know, are, are led by disabled people who are black and indigenous and people of color and people are required as well.

21:04:38 And this is, you know, the way that we are able are going to be able to re envision this space, and, and, and, like actually provide accessibility that is justice oriented and you know that is creative is good is going to only happen if we're holding these spaces together. You know, in community with other people.

21:05:05 And if we don't have relationships with them like they're, you know, they're, you know, that the decision making is going to happen without them and so we do have to build good relationships with people who, you know, could.

21:05:23 Yeah. Who have a limited access to these conversations of what accessibility is and the museum these resources that we have these cultural platforms like they need to include us in decision making and, in yeah on their boards as curators, like some museums don't even have, like, the offices are not accessible, like the production studios aren't accessible like it really shows you like how the, you know, disable the non-disabled or wider culture really what they imagined for us as disabled people.

21:06:04 You know some museums still don't have access programs, you know, or, or access coordinator. So I think this, you know, we really have to like, you know, I think really highlight our own cultural protocols, when it comes to accessibility, the ones that we make those agreements we make with other disabled people.

21:06:27 Because I, you know, and if folks aren't familiar with the open access tenancy, there's a version of it online and you can look it up but anyways it's it I really talked about accessibility is a temporary collectively health space and that's the title of the issue. It's, um, I don't think of accessibility as it like, I don't believe in Universal accessibility I don't think we can be accessible to everyone all the time.

21:06:52 That requires an agreement, it requires people in relationship with each other and yeah and accessibility is fragile it's just like safe space, you know like, you can assume a safe place safe space is safe. That has to be.

21:07:12 Yeah. You have to define what safety means you have to like share that definition with a group of people who are helping in live in that definition.

21:07:24 Thank you so much for that Carmen, and Amanda thank you so much for a great answer.

21:07:31 I have another question.

21:07:34 Hi Carmen, can you talk about your magnificent ramp, climbing it certainly created a full body experience and I'm curious to hear more about how you imagine the experience, or what you hope viewers might feel so it's an interesting segue between the two.

21:07:56 I co developed this with Michael list of good weather and Associates is a design designer that I've been working with for a few years now who's also involved in the show my show the BAM center with Heather Chi Smith and into 2019 and everything in the show is a professional structure, I would say.

21:08:20 The ramp is meant to feel like it's made-up scaffolding. It's precarious it's you know it's this, maybe a framework something that is maybe being like I think about accessibility this way with institutions like it might be like something is coming into being. But, whether it's going to be effective or not as yet to be seen. So, you know like, and I think it gets to at this idea of accessibility being fragile.

21:08:53 And so when you're walking up the ramp I do want people or strolling up the ramp. However, you are experiencing it feeling your way through the installation.

21:09:03 I want people to, you know, like feel that that space in their body and and really, and for be for it to be a bit sort of like unclear as to whether it's, I mean like it scaffolding like it feels a little wobbly.

21:09:23 There's this like big dome floating from the ceiling.

21:09:28 There's, you know, these, these sandbags that kind of were referenced disaster relief, where you can sit and, yeah, I think, you know, I trust in the McKenzie in the ways that I've been discussing accessibility with them and how I know they are there, you know, kind of practicing accessibility and have been and even before I started working with them.

21:09:59 But you know this installation is kind of like pointing to the situation where, you know, like, I don't know what's going to happen next, at the institution and it really is about them, turning that scaffolding into something, You know something solid.

21:10:16 You know something that can reflect the needs of the community at any given time. It may be this scaffolding needs to be torn down. I'm, you know, maybe it needs to take a different form.

21:10:30 And I think that's for, you know, Like I hope to continue to being in conversation with the McKenzie, but I think it's, it really now it's about them.

21:10:41 Yeah, like, like holding their relationships with community, and, you know, some of which have, you know,

21:10:49 they've, they've been in consultation with certain folks even before I started working with them so I hope those relationships deepen in these commitments deeper deep into.

21:11:02 That's great. Do we have another question that kind of plays on the question before the last one, but it's for Amanda, considering the diversity of different levels of accessibility needs and disabilities.

21:11:18 How could he curator programmer facilitator, ensure that their work, ensure that their work would be responsible, or is it even possible to be everything for everyone.

21:11:29 So that's kind of a little bit like what Carmen finished saying few minutes ago.

21:11:34 Mm hmm.

21:11:34 Yes, it's not possible to be everything for everyone.

21:11:39 So, you know, I, I've approached it a number of different ways like when I've created different x, my practice has been exclusively dedicated to disability related themes for the last 10 years and I, you know, depending on the topic of the exhibition, I think about delivering certain modes of access, more specifically to certain audiences.

21:12:05 Other times, I will try and keep it as many different disabilities as possible in my programming. And then I will always be surprised and floored when somebody comes in and says, but what about this you must do this for my son or, I can't access this or this work is triggering me in some way that I would never have anticipated.

21:12:27 So it's really, really hard. I think that if you gesture towards you know the audience's that you think will benefit from your exhibit and that you know will be present, like it's a lot of collaboration with your institution as a freelancer, I have to

21:12:45 just talk to my institution and ask them, what kinds of audiences that they have. So I'm being specific to, to that particular community.

21:12:55 I think that that's like the first step. and then and then to the artists that I'm working with, so that the artists feel comfortable in the space and comfortable and the way that they communicate with the community that's important, and

21:13:10 then also to be responsive and open when your audience comes in and asks questions and asks if they can have a certain accommodation and then you can try and meet that need.

21:13:24 So I've tried to do all of those things.

21:13:28 Sometimes I'm limited because there's certain restrictions on like technicality like touching works in the exhibition. That's one of my favorite things to do, and that's really hard to achieve.

21:13:45 So it's a lot of conversations with the artists to see well what can we do so that we can grant access to technology in some kind of way.

21:13:54 That's the answer to the question it's just an ongoing conversation with your artists with your institution, and with your community.

21:14:04 Thank you so much, that was really great. I appreciate that a lot. And I guess I just have one more question for Amanda, when is your book coming out?

21:14:14 Yeah well hopefully the end of 2020, with 25 chapters in the book.

21:14:24 Carmen is actually one of the contributors. So you'll be able to read a contribution from common which is really nice.

21:14:29 And there's people contributing from all over the world so we have people in Europe, over here in Canada, here in California and across the United States, Australia, Asia, so I'm really, really excited to hear all of these contributions because they're providing best practice like templates for creative access, and they're all talking about examples of like with a from a museum like an institutional perspective or from an artist perspective.

21:14:59 So you'll hear you know very different voices being represented in the book which is really exciting.

21:15:07 Awesome. Well congratulations and I can't wait to get my hands on it later.

21:15:14 It's coming out in print, but it will also be an E book. Oh great, awesome. And more accessible for some folks.

21:15:22 So I guess we're all at have questions, but I did want to take just another quick moment to thank Carmen and Amanda for joining us tonight this awesome conversation I really appreciate your candor and sharing your knowledge and personal experiences.

21:15:35 I thank you so much to Nicole it's been such a pleasure working on this project with you and then MacKenzie.

21:15:40 I want to thank all of the contributors of the issue for their patience with black flash and the black flash team through the creation of this project and all their incredible contributions.

21:15:52 And also thank you to Dean our interpreter and Scott from collective broadcast for all their help tonight.

21:15:59 The issue is going to be is currently available in pre order. We're going to be going to print hopefully by the end of this week, and I'm very excited and so you can order it now and then it will be emailed the PDF and the initial the emails and sent out to you as soon as it's ready to go.

21:16:18 And you can, if you are able to visit the MacKenzie. I hope everyone checks out Carmen's incredible exhibition.

21:16:26 Thank you everyone is, does anyone have any final words or anything they would like to plug before we close up for tonight.

21:16:35 Just wanted to say thank you. Thanks everybody, and I yeah so many people were important to this issue and making it happen, and exhibition and it wouldn't have happened without you.

21:16:48 And, and all the access workers and all the labor put towards accessibility, the effort intention. I just wanted to acknowledge that so thank you.

21:16:59 Thank you very much. Okay. Have a wonderful night everybody take care, be safe.