

Abstract

This study explores questions around disability and ability in arts education and artistic-pedagogic research. It proposes disability as a transformative force that can challenge and push further neo-liberal notions of diversity. The aim is to move towards more equitable practices and affirmative spaces in and through arts pedagogy. The study continues a process of investigating disability and ability, stemming from a performative workshop that took place at the Research Pavilion, Venice Biennale in 2017. The workshop is part of the authors' research project, which is developing artistic, performative, post-qualitative and intertextual research methodology. It uses the means of performance art as a way to facilitate an experimental, artistic-pedagogic process. Drawing from contemporary disability studies, as well as feminist and posthumanist theories, the study looks into disability as a complex, material-discursive phenomenon. The authors argue that whether or not we are disabled, we are all vulnerable, interdependent and entangled in socio-material structures. Disability

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can inform our understanding of this vulnerability and relationality, and help to destabilize dominant and normative notions of subjectivity and agency.

Key words: arts pedagogy, artistic research, disability, posthumanism, performance

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Towards affirmative spaces in and through arts pedagogy

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Introduction

For our workshop, we have prepared a bowl full of suggestions to trigger imagined disabilities. We have written words on pieces of paper, and placed them in the bowl. Some words are concrete, some more abstract: ears, eyes, tongue, brain, lower body, objects, the floor, technical devices, touch, light, clothes, sounds, bones, lungs, spine, skin, nose, emotions, hands, colours, muscles. . . . In the workshop we pass the bowl around, asking all the participants to draw out their disability for the next exercise. They get a moment to reflect on how they wish to relate to this word. We propose creating a restriction or changing something about how one normally behaves and interacts. We propose that disability can also be something positive – it can even be an extrasensory, or ‘magic’ ability. Basically, it can be anything non-normative. When the participants have found a way to embody their word, we give them a simple, performative task, such as drawing, writing, moving, doing an action, using objects, the body or language. As props, we have brought brightly coloured lycra cloth in different shapes and sizes, paper and card, markers and pens, instant mobile photo printers, elastic bands, tape, blue-tack and clips for attaching things on the walls. We ask the participants to make traces in the space during and in between exercises, with the aim of building an installation that can be viewed by the pavilion visitors. We, the facilitators, also take part in the exercises. During and in between the exercises we document moments with mobile phone

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cameras, print out photos and attach them on the wall, amongst drawings, pieces of writing and other creative works produced by the participants. After each exercise, we have a discussion with the group, reflecting on what happened, how the experience was for everyone and what questions and reflections it raised. “I lost my connection. On the other hand, I got more connected”, one participant reflects. One participant has been worried that his blindfolded partner will accidentally break art objects in the space, but because of his own limitation, he has not had a way to communicate this. We reflect that this makes us think about relationality, dependency and responsibility – themes closely connected to disability. Another participant has found a way to connect with her abilities: “I went from disabling myself to enabling – to what feels good”.

The above extract reflects on our artistic-pedagogic collaboration at the Research Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2017. In this context, we facilitated a workshop around the theme of disability, within a programme of events during an exhibition of artistic research organized by the University of the Arts Helsinki, titled ‘Utopia of Access’. The workshop was a combination of each of our earlier artistic and pedagogic practices and research interests. Both of us have experience of working with differently abled people. Both also have a background in performance art, and both are currently doing a doctorate in arts pedagogy. There are also many differences between us, and between our approaches, and we were interested in seeing what these differences could produce.

In the workshop, we explored the theme of disability through performative, sensory and reflective exercises. Our aim was to approach disability as a concept that could be explored creatively. We were interested in disability as something that concerns everyone, one way or another, sooner or later. The idea was to reflect, and encourage others to reflect, on experiences of ableness and disability. To achieve this, we aimed at facilitating experiences that destabilize ableness/disability as fixed identity categories, playfully exploring how our disabilities and abilities emerge in relation to our bodies, and the environment. We were interested in the liminal spaces, boundaries and thresholds, tensions and relations between, within and around disability and ability.

The obvious way to tackle discrimination around disabilities is to have a stronger emphasis on equal opportunities and inclusion: working towards changing our educational systems and pedagogic practices so that people with disabilities can have access to all levels of arts education. It is certainly important that we see different subjects: people with and without disabilities on the stage, in the media, and in leadership positions in the educational systems of performing arts.

However, in our workshop we had not especially planned to work with people with disabilities. Rather, we invited fellow artists, researchers,

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pedagogues and professionals of other fields – with or without disabilities – to join us. We did not want to focus our attention on a group of others, because we were interested in exploring otherness *within the self*. In other words, our aim was to not objectify or target a group that is labelled as disabled. This choice was influenced by the discourses of critical disability studies: we did not want to take disability for granted, as something that only concerns those people who have a medical diagnosis, or as something that is already predefined and known.

In this study we continue the performative process of investigating questions around disability and ability, in and through arts pedagogy and artistic-pedagogic research. We draw from theories around disability, diversity, vulnerability, pedagogy and performativity. We discuss disability as a complex, material-discursive phenomenon, proposing that it has the potential to destabilize and transform normative notions of subjectivity and agency. This transformation, as we will argue, can provide a basis for more equitable future practices in arts pedagogy.

Methodological entanglements: performative, artistic and post-qualitative research

The idea for the workshop emerged from our artistic-pedagogic research interests, questions and earlier practices. However, we did not formulate a research question or a particular problem to address in advance. Instead, we aimed at addressing the broader problematics in and around the phenomena we were looking at, allowing the process to lead the way, and new questions to emerge from it. We used our subjective, embodied and tacit knowledge as artists and teachers. According to Brad Haseman (2006), this experiential way of carrying out the research – seeing where the practice takes you – is similar to how many practice-led researchers work: “They tend to dive in, to commence practising to see what emerges” (p. 4). Practice-led approaches in research are connected to what is known as the ‘performance turn’ or the ‘performative paradigm’ in qualitative research. In performative research “the symbolic data works performatively. It not only expresses the research, but in that expression becomes the research itself” (p. 6).

As artist-pedagogues we are not only informed by the performative turn of qualitative research; more specifically, we are informed by the discourses and practices of artistic research. In artistic research the research happens *through* the arts rather than *on* the arts: knowledge emerges from, and is articulated through, artistic practices that are embodied, experimental and performative (e.g. Borgdorff, 2012; Porkola, 2014).

As researchers coming from arts pedagogy, we are also aware of the discourses of post-qualitative research, which have been influential in contemporary educational research. Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre argues that qualitative research has become method-driven, and as such does not do

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justice to post-structuralist philosophy. She introduces the concept *post-qualitative inquiry* to destabilize what she calls the “conventional humanist qualitative inquiry”. She recommends researchers to shift the focus from methodology to onto-epistemology by starting with the theory and concepts. (St. Pierre, 2011, pp. 613–623) According to St. Pierre, the method and design in qualitative research have become more important than epistemology and ontology. The problem is that rigid, pre-determined methodology can make the research conventional, reductionist and hegemonic, missing its radical possibility “to produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently” (p. 613).

This study continues our research process conceptually, reflecting on the practice, and taking the inquiry further through theory. In the workshop we approached our questions through practice; now we approach them through theoretical reflection. Moving between texts and experiences, tracing the textual and embodied relations, we are also integrating *intertextuality* within our research approach. According to Graham Allen (2000), intertextuality “foregrounds notions of relationality, interconnectedness, and interdependence” (p. 5). These notions are close to the contemporary theories that we are inspired by, as well as the themes of our practice.

In our writing the embodied knowledge from the workshop is intertwined with theories and concepts that can inform and feed into the practice again. Rather than aiming to define or frame experiences from the workshop with theory, we see the writing as another performative step in the research process.

Mapping the minefield: what can we say about disability?

Disability is a strange label (like most words in identity politics: woman, black, queer, etc.). It adheres to individual bodies and to a social scene, to a structural position as well as an embodied, lived experience. And yet, it describes nothing shared: no one form of embodiment or orientation to the world, no origin story, no diasporic experience – not even this myth of shared social oppression, not really. Disability experiences are individual. They are often lonely. They happen in doctors’ and psychiatrists’ offices, in playgrounds, in staring encounters in the street, in embarrassing moments of silence in conversations. Disability is an individuating experience, one in which difference, in its many different forms, becomes experiential as a category function: NOT YOU. You cannot play like this. You cannot walk here. You will hurt yourself if you join them.

(Kuppers, 2011, pp. 97–98)

The first problematic question we need to address, before we can go on, is Do we have a right to write about disability or use it as a theme in our work, as

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able-bodied and able-minded people? Who has the right to talk about disability?

During the Civil Rights era of the 1960s in the United States, disability activists made a valid statement: “Nothing about us without us”. These activists demanded that disabled people should have the lead in anything to do with disability. The movement gave rise to the *social model of disability*. Disability activists insisted that disability is a fundamentally social phenomenon: it is not simply a direct result of a medical impairment, and therefore it is not sufficient to deal with it in terms of medical care and cure. In other words, the ‘cause’ of disability was not to be found in the individual body, but in the environment – in how society disables people through lack of accessibility, injustice and unequal opportunities. The social model of disability has had an enormous effect on the ways disability is understood and investigated (Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006).

Critically developing on the basis of the social model, the postmodern-inspired disability scholars of the 1990s emphasized the multiplicity and diversity of disabled experiences, highlighting how disability is constructed in different cultures, and how conceptions of normality play a part in this construction (Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006). More recently, feminist disability studies and crip theory scholars have analysed disability in relation to gender and queer theory (see, e.g. Garland Thomson, 2011; McRuer, 2006a). What is common to these contemporary approaches to disability is the aim to reach beyond the disabled/non-disabled binary, through critically investigating the socio-political structures and deep-rooted societal ideologies that define disability.

In critical disability studies of the past two decades, those who critiqued binary approaches to disability have themselves been subject to critique. The critics have pointed out that disability is fundamentally different from many other group identities. To be disabled is not a choice, and for many, disability causes real suffering. According to Simo Vehmas and Nick Watson (2014), using difference as a concept through which to critique the disability identity is problematic:

Motor neuron disease, depression or spinal cord injury are the kinds of conditions that we would prefer not to have, and this is not merely because of the cultural representations attached to them but because these conditions are the kinds of predicaments that cause suffering irrespective of one’s cultural environment.

(p. 649)

This leads us to broader questions of diversity. At first glance, it might seem that diversity will solve our problems. What if we simply emphasize that we are all different in our abilities? However, diversity is a complex and ambiguous concept. According to Lennard J. Davis (2014), “the idea of

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diversity is linked to a postmodern concept of subjectivity as being malleable, mobile, and capable of being placed on a continuum, complex, socially constructed, and with a strong element of free play and choice” (p. 5). This view on diversity is well suited to the neo-liberal ideology of free-market and consumer choice. Davis points out that disability does not fit into this postmodern, neo-liberal idea of subjectivity. Disability is “the state of exception that undergirds our very idea of diversity” (p. 8). It has an *abject position* as something that is excluded, hidden and forgotten, despite all the well-meaning, liberal aims of accepting, tolerating and celebrating differences. Following Davis, the solution is not simply to include disability in our understanding of diversity, but to acknowledge that disability can function as a force that pushes us to be more aware of that which is not seen in the cultural representations that surround us.

In our research we aim to destabilize ableness/disability as fixed identity categories and engage with disability as something that concerns everyone, one way or another. With these aims we take a critical stance in relation to the dominant binary logics of ability vs. disability. Following Davis, does this mean that we actually fall into the problematic, neo-liberal concept of diversity? Are we, in fact, reinforcing the marginalized position of people who live with the embodied, medically defined reality of disability? Are we indirectly using the experiences of Others as our inspiration? Are we *appropriating* disability into our purposes? The question of cultural appropriation has been addressed in postcolonial discourses of the past two decades – there has been an aim to *decolonize* research methodologies in order to address the ethically problematic position of the Western researcher in relation to non-Western others, and to develop more equitable research practices (see, e.g. Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

We aim to address the complex questions around appropriation through our research. For us, it is about power: mediating and negotiating our power, and acknowledging, enabling, supporting and responding to the power of others. It is not a question of *what* we do, but *how* we do what we do. We like to think about this *how* with Max van Manen’s (2015) ‘pedagogical tact’. Pedagogical tact is based on an intuitive sensitivity and sensibility in relation to the learner, and the particular context in which learning takes place. It can manifest itself as a ‘mindful orientation’ in the instant action of teaching: as a subtle influence, openness, situational confidence, or attunement to subjectivity (van Manen, 2015, p. 79). For van Manen, doubt and ethical uncertainty, as well as contradictions, conflicts, polarities and tensions, all belong to pedagogy.

Fundamentally, we are faced with the question of *otherness* here. According to Susan Wendell (1996, p. 60):

When we make people ‘Other’, we group them together as the objects of our experience instead of regarding them as subjects of experience with whom

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we might identify, and we see them primarily as symbolic of something else – usually, but not always, something we reject and fear and project on to them.

Othering can also seem as a process of *differentiation*, which, according to Sara Ahmed (2000), is fundamental in our subjectification. As Ahmed writes, our bodies are shaped and materialized in complex relations with other bodies: those that we see as familiar and those that we see as strange. This differentiation defines our own bodily experiences, and our embodied identities. Our bodily identities are always mediated by techniques and practices of differentiation. Who we are, and how we experience our bodily selves, is based on separating the self from others, inside from outside (Ahmed, 2000).

As arts pedagogues interested in disability, we wish to explore otherness without *othering*, without grouping disabled people as objects of our interest. In order to fulfil this aim, we must critically investigate how the disabled body is othered in society; how disability as a category is defined by normative, discriminating and stigmatizing structures. According to Linda Ware (2001), the normal/abnormal binary is central in the discrimination of disabled people in institutionalized and categorical systems, such as education and social policy. If we critically examine how disability is categorized in relation to what is seen as normal, we discover that this othering is determined by society. Davis (1995) illustrates this ideological process with an evident example, comparing wearing a hearing aid to wearing glasses: both serve to amplify a deficient sense, but wearing a hearing aid can be seen as more disabling. As we see it, a hearing aid is not disabling in itself, but the use of it may highlight a disability or deficiency.

Disability aesthetics and the performative body

It may not seem obvious to consider disability in terms of performativity. As discussed earlier, disability is a different identity category compared to, for example, gender and sexuality, so it may seem that it is not performative in the same sense that these other identity categories can be. However, disability has a distinct relationship with performativity. For disabled people, being visibly different in the public realm can create situations where they are being looked at, as if on stage – as if the disabled person is a performer and passers-by the audience. Depending on the individual and on the situation, these experiences can be stigmatizing and intrusive, or joyful and empowering, or anything in between (Østern, 2009).

Petra Kupperts (2001) writes about the tension between *invisibility* and *hypervisibility* in the experiences of people with physical impairments: whilst people with disabilities are instantly defined and categorized on the basis of their physicality, they may still be invisible in the sense that they are not given the same opportunities as others to be active members of the public sphere.

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This contradiction is interesting in relation to teaching and practicing performing arts. The question is how we can encourage people to be and become visible as themselves, without paying indiscreet and stigmatizing attention to those who are different from the norm.

In the arts, through creative, embodied practices we can disrupt and destabilize normative representations of the body. Western mainstream performing arts have traditionally privileged representations of the able body, with an 'exclusionary mindset' (Cooper Albright, 1997, p. 56). As Ann Cooper Albright (1997) suggests, we need to "consciously construct new images and ways of imagining the disabled body" (p. 66). Most performing arts training programmes still foster virtuosity, skill and control, favouring aesthetic and bodily normativity and able-bodied, cognitively high-functioning agency. To change this, and to establish more accessible structures in the performing arts, we need to have more people with disabilities in visible positions of power: on the stage, and in leadership positions. We also need to be aware of the complexity and ambivalence around the representations of disability. The danger is that we may mask the real issues of ableism by including disabilities as tokens, as exceptions that prove the rule, or as objects of our gaze. According to Esther Ignagni and Kathryn Church (2008), people with disabilities have always had an ambivalent relationship with research and art, because both of these fields have taken part in the traditions of normalization and exclusion. In the past, disabled bodies have mainly been represented in performing arts as monstrous objects, in circus acts and freak shows. And still, in the 21st century, although disabled performers have been included in, for example, contemporary dance productions, their differences have sometimes been camouflaged with ableist aesthetic choices, and visual illusions that hide that part of the disability which we find difficult to look at (Cooper Albright, 1997).

According to Tobin Siebers (2005), disability can also suggest different kinds of aesthetics that are in contrast to the dominant representations of bodies as able and healthy, and to the harmony, integrity and beauty defined by ableism. In the context of art, disability raises questions about accessibility, authorship and agency. It suggests different artistic agencies and roles of participation than what we are used to seeing in the art world. Disability destabilizes and deconstructs how we think about art, and how we see the role of the artist. Siebers writes about *disability aesthetics*, emphasizing the presence of different bodies and minds in aesthetic value creation. "Disability may operate both as a critical framework for questioning aesthetic presuppositions in the history of art and as a value in its own right important to future conceptions of what art is" (p. 546).

Relating to disability: vulnerability of the (post)human subject

Despite the complexities and problematics around disability there is something about it that touches and moves us. In our artistic-pedagogic work we are working with human relations, within socio-material environments and circumstances that mediate, restrict and support our work. Non-human elements also play a role in our work: We ask people to express themselves through objects and materials, making traces and physical gestures in the material spaces that we work in. Through our work, we want to embrace relations, dependencies, anomalies and debilities that make us (post)human.

Contemporary posthumanist feminist theorists see the subject as interdependent, relational, vulnerable and entangled with social and material structures. Rosi Braidotti (2006) writes about subjectivity as nomadic: as a “nonunitary, open, and dynamic” process of becoming, rather than a “fixed and self-transparent” entity (p. 208). For Braidotti (2013), the post-human subject is a “complex assemblage of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured” (p. 159). She also references disability studies, acknowledging disability as something that can exemplify the post-human through critique of normative bodily models, and through advocacy of new, creative models of embodiment. For Braidotti (2013) disability signifies the ‘demise of humanism’ because it makes space for non-normative and anti-establishment ways of living life (p. 151).

In her recent work, Judith Butler (2016) discusses vulnerability as a fundamental quality of the human body. Vulnerability, for Butler, is closely connected to her notions of relationality and performativity. Through our bodies, we are exposed to others; our bodies are vulnerable, and as bodily subjects we are dependent on social relations and networks of support. Our relations to others are always performative – performativity is not only us *acting*, but also us *being acted on*. Butler also points out that to be able to move, we all need a supportive environment and set of technologies that enable our movements (Butler, 2016).

Karen Barad also writes about how we are interconnected. She introduces the concept of *intra-action* as an alternative to interactivity, where the different components, such as the material, the body and space are separated from each other from the start. In intra-action, no components act separately; the borders are fluid and indistinct. Our actions and encounters are part of a complex network of active and equal agents. In this material-discursive performativity the agency is not only about how we, as humans, act upon each other, but also the material has a constitutive power (Barad, 2003).

The theories of Braidotti, Butler and Barad seem to propose that, whether or not we are disabled, we are all vulnerable and intra-dependent; we all need assistance, support and an environment that supports our mobility. We are all entangled in relations with other people and with the environment. Through these relations we constantly construct our identities and make sense of our

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embodied experiences. Thinking about our subjectivity through disability can inform our understanding of this relationality and intra-dependency and help us destabilize dominant and normative notions of subjectivity.

Re-inventing ableness and disability through artistic-pedagogic events

In the workshop we are passing the bowl around, again asking all the participants to draw out a word to trigger an imagined disability. One participant draws the word ‘upper body’ from the bowl. We are working in pairs and she ends up working with someone who has drawn the word ‘technical devices’. This time we also ask the participants to draw out another piece of paper, which gives them a task. The pair gets a paper that says “Keep the same distance to each other and view the artworks in the space”. After having some time to figure out how to relate to these words and what to do, the pair starts wandering around the space, one of them blindfolded with her arms tied tightly against her body, and the other walking right next to her, with her arm around her partner’s shoulders. The one supporting the other is holding a mobile phone in front of her face – she has chosen her restriction to be such that she can only view the space through the mobile phone camera. She is also describing the artworks in the space to her partner. Afterwards, the blindfolded participant reflects that not being able to see made her very curious about what else was going on in the space – the artworks that she was most interested in were the live events created by other participants.

In our practice, we aim to find productive disruptions, and connections between the familiar and the strange, the self and the other. This can be materialized as an aesthetic detail or embodied gesture – a way of being in relation to others, materials, technical devices, or space. The exercises we proposed in our workshop can be seen as an ‘enabling constraint’; as restrictions that foster creativity (Manning & Massumi, 2014). The intention of the exercises and materials in our work is not to lead to one way of performing or a certain idea of what the outcome should be, but rather open up, disrupt, destabilize and re-invent. Each one of us will encounter the exercises and materials differently. As ‘enabling constraints’ the exercises can potentially set the frame for something new to occur – an event to take place. Dennis Atkinson (2012) proposes a *pedagogy of the event*. He proposes that true learning happens in the event as it opens up potential for something to happen. By taking risks you promote creative and individual strategies for learning (Atkinson, 2012).

Through our artistic-pedagogic research, we aim to find ways to understand disability differently, in a way that allows a transformation and destabilization of stagnated, oppressive and discriminating structures and static identity categories. In this, we are inspired by Kupperts’s ‘rhizomatic model of

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disability’, which she develops from the Deleuze-Guattarian concept of the rhizome. The rhizomatic model goes beyond oppositions between the extrinsic and the intrinsic, the socially constructed and the medical. On an experiential level, it avoids juxtaposing between affects related to disability, such as pride and shame or pain and pleasure. Producing multiple meanings, it sees the subject as always becoming, moving and shifting into new positions and states of being (Kuppers, 2011). Through exploring our different abilities in relation to materials, spaces, our own and other bodies, we can disrupt normative expectations about what performing bodies should look like, how they should move, and what kind of agency they should produce in the specific, material and social contexts of performing.

Performance art pedagogy and the perspective of disability

Performance art is an art form that escapes definitions. Very often it is about the disruption of borders, the resistance to definitions, the asking of awkward questions and the autobiographical. Exercises employed by performance art pedagogues can be useful tools in investigating disability, as they often encourage us to destabilize, resist conformity and to go outside our comfort zones. However, if we turn it the other way around, disability as a phenomenon can contribute to the development of performance art pedagogy by preventing the art from being commodified, opening up new perspectives and accommodating the unknown.

Charles R. Garoian (2014) calls for a pedagogy that is exploratory, experimental and improvisational and that can embrace unanticipated crises and events: ‘An untamed messy pedagogy’ (p. 384). For Garoian, performance art pedagogy is the praxis of postmodern theory: It creates discourses and practices that resist cultural conformity through multi-centric, participatory, indeterminate and reflexive strategies. It forsakes the dominant, cultural mainstream and aims to reposition the marginalized body. Taking influences, e.g. from Freire’s ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’, Giroux’s critical pedagogy and Mouffe’s ‘radical democracy’, Garoian (1999) proposes a pedagogy that enables students to critique oppressive and dominant cultural values. Students can debate their differences, whilst contesting socially and historically constructed ideas, myths and utopias, and creating new ones. They can agree and disagree, or agree to disagree, making the “paradoxical struggle of democracy visible” (p. 11).

Disability, as a complex social, political and cultural construction, offers a critical and productive point of view to arts pedagogy, as well as artistic-pedagogic research. Arts pedagogy can offer means to explore ableism as a socio-political issue, whilst raising awareness about disability cultures. The work of disabled artists can function as a point of reference for new ways of integrating the questions of disability into the curriculum; in the spirit of critical pedagogy, teachers can utilize the pedagogical strategies inherent in

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these artists' work (Eisenhauer, 2007). This way of approaching disability within arts pedagogy implements the 'affirmative model' of disability: "The affirmative model directly challenges presumptions of personal tragedy and the determination of identity through the value-laden presumptions of non-disabled people" (Swain & French, 2000, p. 578). According to Nicole Matthews (2012), non-disabled teachers have a responsibility to acknowledge disability in their teaching in two ways: firstly, they need to lobby for more disabled teachers. Secondly, they need to bring the perspective of disability studies into the curriculum, in order to facilitate critical reflection on the conventions of disability representations.

Towards arts pedagogy as an affirmative space for disabilities and abilities

In our workshop at the Research Pavilion, our aim was to facilitate experiences that destabilize ableness and disability as fixed identity categories, embracing our (post)human experiences of vulnerability, relationality and intra-dependency. Through embodied exercises, interactions with materials and the space, and verbal, textual and visual reflections, we facilitated explorations and reflections around the theme of disability. This practice was based on understanding disability as a complex, material-discursive phenomenon, and as a transformative force that can challenge and push further neo-liberal notions of diversity. As artistic-pedagogic researchers we are interested in facilitating spaces for performative inquiry, allowing the collective process to inform our thinking and doing, and embodied, tacit knowledge to emerge from the practice.

In our collaboration, thus far we have explored ways to develop artistic-pedagogic processes and strategies that embrace differences, without *othering*, without singling out anyone in a stigmatizing way. We have acknowledged the complexity of what it is to be a (post)human subject, able and/or disabled. Through artistic and pedagogic experiments, and shared reflections, we have investigated how we can facilitate a space where different individuals, with and without disabilities, can co-exist. For us, this co-existing does not mean aiming for a consensus or compromise. It does not mean avoiding conflicts, or not having space for risk-taking. Rather than trying to suppress or avoid tensions and frictions between different individuals, approaches, or aims, we can allow them to transform into something creative and productive.

We believe that through arts pedagogy we have a unique opportunity to address questions around marginalization, discrimination and inequality. In the spirit of van Manen's (2015) 'pedagogical tact', we propose that as art pedagogues we should be aware of how we negotiate power through our pedagogic choices. For us, this awareness means staying open to changing our plans according to the needs of the participants, and allowing everyone to

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interpret the proposed exercises according to their abilities and interests. On the basis of our practices and the theories we have discussed above, we suggest encouraging individuals to encounter otherness within themselves, rather than othering people who are different. Those people who are not labelled as disabled can seek to find more flexibility and openness in their ‘compulsory able-bodiedness’ (see McRuer, 2006b). This kind of critical and transformative self-reflection can make space for disabilities and non-normative abilities, without reinforcing value-laden oppositions and hierarchies between the able and the disabled.

In this study we have discussed the social, discursive and political complexity of disability. We have reflected on our practice, allowing theories and experiences to become intertwined, sometimes not knowing where this becoming will take us. Developing from a posthumanist understanding of disability, we have proposed an intra-dependent, relational view of subjectivity and artistic agency as a way towards creating affirmative spaces for disabilities and abilities in and through arts pedagogy.

Discrimination is not only social or discursive, but it is often also *material*. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the material environments we work in, aiming to make those spaces physically accessible for those who wish to participate. Beyond questions of accessibility, we propose facilitating spaces and situations that allow differences, debilities and anomalies to be or become visible – also those that challenge us and push us out of our comfort zones.

Through our concrete choices, actions, words and gestures, we can tackle social and physical barriers, making space for new discoveries and realizations; moving away from the dominant and normative centres, towards paradoxes, contradictions and frictions, into the unexpected. That is a creative place where transformations can happen: where we can imagine and bring into reality new ways of becoming, with and through arts pedagogy.

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