

# Concealed/ Reveal:

## Disabled, D/deaf and neurodivergent artists driving creativity

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Go to any gallery in the country and you are sure to find works of beauty and creativity by Disabled, D/deaf and neurodivergent artists, whether in sculpture, paint, or performance. Yet, looking at the labels you might never know the artists' stories. Too often they remain hidden.

Disability is often seen as a dirty word, an insult or something to conceal. Instead of what it is people's life experience and not a shameful secret. It can be a creative force pushing artists to tell new stories or develop new ways of creating. The artists featured were all influenced by disability, D/deafness or neurodivergence in some way.

These stories show that Disability history is vivid, bold and complex. It has often been misinterpreted or ignored and is a story that can only be told by those who have lived it.

That's why this exhibition was produced with Curating for Change, who work to ensure that D/deaf, disabled and neurodiverse people are represented in museums, enabling their voices to be heard as curators. Throughout the exhibition, you can hear the voices of our coproducers.



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# Terms and words used in the exhibition

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## **Ableism**

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When societies act in an unfair way and discriminate against disabled people. Or when people prejudge disabled people negatively.

## **Impairment**

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A change or deterioration in the body which affects the way someone experiences or engages with the world.

## **Social Model of Disability**

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A way of understanding disability, a model that says people are not disabled by impairment but instead by the barriers in society. These can be physical or social.

## **D/deaf**

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Deaf is often used to refer to people who have been Deaf from birth, they may identify as culturally Deaf and have sign language as their first language.

The use of lower case deaf is used for those who do not identify as culturally Deaf and may experience hearing impairment. They do not usually use sign language as their main language.

## **Neurodiverse**

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This term is used to describe having a brain that works differently from the average or 'neurotypical' person.

# Ways of creating

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**Our physical experience shapes art, informing each brush stroke or pencil mark. As such, lived experiences of disability have shaped art, pushing artists to explore new boundaries, whether they acquired impairments later or lived with them all their life.**

The names attached to these works are famous, their impairments less so. Too often art histories have erased the facts due to the social stigma of, or ignorance about, disability.

Despite this, disabled artists have always been present. Their experience of disability is crucial for understanding their work. Being disabled pushed these artists to innovate new ways of creating. Ways that would cement their legacy in art history, from Matisse's painting and collage to Wedgwood's pottery.

# Henri Matisse (1869–1954)

## **Travail et Joie**

1947, Lithograph poster on paper

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By the time Matisse designed this poster he was using a wheelchair and often worked in bed. He called this ‘une seconde vie’ or ‘second life’. It was a period that saw him develop new ways of using bold colours and lines.

Moving through the ‘garden in his mind’ Matisse saw ideas on the ceiling. He hired assistants to cut strips of painted paper, which he used to interpret his ideas.



Henri Matisse

© Photo by -/AFP via Getty Images



# Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975)

## Oblique Forms

1969, Lithograph print on paper

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Hepworth was known for her large-scale sculptures, but in her later years her focus shifted. She experimented with other art forms including bronzes and prints. Hepworth always drew inspiration from nature and now became more ‘inward looking’, exploring themes like vulnerability.

These changes may have been fuelled by Hepworth’s changing health. In the mid-1960s she was diagnosed with cancer and had reduced mobility after a fall. She continued making art until her death. As Hepworth’s son-in-law wrote, despite seeming frail, “she had great toughness and integrity.”



Dame Barbara Hepworth, 1968

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Bridgeman Images

# Bartram Hiles (1872–1927)

## Castle Combe

1912

Oil on canvas

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As a child, Hiles lost both arms in a tram accident, and by the age of ten he learnt to paint using his mouth. This was the start of a career that would last a lifetime.

By 18 he was a prize-winning artist, and at 21 he was studying in Paris where Renoir, Monet, and Pissarro were also working. By the time Hiles was in his thirties, his work was in royal collections, including Queen Victoria's, and he was an active figure in the Bristol art scene.



Photo of Bertram Hiles Painting Castle Combe  
Image courtesy of Bristol 1904 Arts

# Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795)

## **Wedgwood plaque**

1800s

Jasperware

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These blue and white figures are typical of Wedgwood's most famous style of ceramics, Jasperware. The style became synonymous with Wedgwood and his potteries.

Born to a family of potters, childhood smallpox left Josiah Wedgwood physically impaired. He was unable to operate a pottery wheel and so experimented with new ways of producing, including new glazes and raised designs. To achieve his vision he opened factories with huge numbers of staff, and production continues to this day.

# Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795)

## **Teapot and cover**

1768–1780

Basalt ware

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Wedgwood surrounded himself with a network of artists to help achieve his vision. Sculptors crafted delicate figures out of wax that would then be reproduced via moulds on his pottery.

One of his more unique requests was commissioning a wooden leg from artist and model-maker Mr Addison, when his leg was amputated.

Wedgwood chose to undergo this procedure to take control of his own health and experience.

# Auguste Renoir (1841–1919)

## **Cros de Cagnes**

About 1910

Oil on canvas

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The fluid brush strokes in this piece resulted from Renoir's changing technique. Almost twenty years before, Renoir developed an autoimmune condition affecting his joints. He was determined to keep working and would have his assistant place tools in his hand or his wife strap brushes to his fingers. As a result, his brushwork became looser, now flowing from the whole arm. When asked why he continued, Renoir replied: "The pain passes, but the beauty remains."

# Ways of creating

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## Co-producer's response to 'Cros de Cagnes' by Auguste Renoir

Art historians and others seem more fascinated by the physical adaptations disabled artists make, than their creativity, e.g. Renoir's "wide variety of coping mechanisms" and "his ingenuity to come up with different ways to continue painting even as his arthritis weakened him".

It appears he used a system of cylinders and a crank that would bring sections of the canvas within reach when he painted, and his son assisted him by putting the brush between his fingers when he couldn't pick it up.

Most disabled people like me, do just find ways to do practical tasks differently, but don't feel this to be remarkable. I know little about art, but a fair bit about being disabled, and I believe that Renoir may have found different ways to do practical things, but only



he himself knows whether his impairment or being a disabled person had any impact at all on his artistic style and inspiration.

Certainly, I know my becoming disabled did not make me any more or less creative – it just enabled me to have the privilege of meeting many talented disabled artists and performers through the Disability Arts Movement!

**Ruth Pickersgil**  
**Chair of WECIL**



# Ways of sensing

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**What do senses mean to you? They are how we process the world around us, whether by sight, sound, touch, taste or smell. Each of us has a unique perception and experience thanks to our senses, and over a lifetime they can change. Changes we can see in the works produced by Goya, Hockney, Turner and more.**

Disabilities and changes are often framed as a loss, something that reduces a person. But these changes can drive creativity, forcing artists to feel in new ways. The same paintings his critics called the ‘fruits of a diseased eye’ are now Turner’s most celebrated works.

As Hockney has said, when one sense changes others adapt. Describing the impact of losing his hearing on his work, Hockney wrote: “If you lose one sense, you gain other senses, and I feel I could see space clearer. I put it down to the hearing loss.”

# Camille Pissarro (1830–1903)

## **The Wool Market**

About 1890

Ink and pencil watercolour

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Daily life was a common theme in the Impressionists' works. Many painters like Pissarro worked outdoors among their subjects, as with this sketch that captures the bustle of the wool market.

Later, an eye condition he developed made it painful to work outside. He adapted by painting views from windows. Working at height and looking down on the scene developed an engaging, more expansive perspective to his works, taking in the broader scene.



Camille Pissarro, Rue de l'Épicerie, Rouen  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851)

## **Avon Gorge and Bristol Hotwell**

About 1791–1792

Watercolour over pencil on paper

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The sharp focus seen in this early watercolour is dramatically different to Turner's later, more emotive works. His better-known late paintings often feature blurred and dazzling light, effects that were influenced by his cataracts and changing vision.

These experimental works drew prejudiced criticism, with one critic describing his work as "indicative of mental disease". But they would go on to inspire new generations of artists, like the Impressionists, to view the world differently.



JMW Turner, Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway  
© The National Gallery, London

# Edward Lear (1812–1888)

## **View of Bracciano**

About 1840

Pencil and grey wash on paper

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Edward Lear is best remembered for his nonsense poems such as ‘The Owl and The Pussycat’, but this was not his first artistic pursuit. He started as a natural history illustrator, but when his eyesight declined it prevented him from making detailed images.

Lear pivoted to a career creating beautiful landscapes for English audiences to enjoy, travelling to Albania, Egypt and beyond. Throughout his travels he managed the epilepsy he had lived with since childhood, hiding it from friends due to social stigma.



Edward Lear, *Macrocerus aracanga*  
Image – public domain



# David Hockney (b. 1937)

## **Bedlam**

1961–1962

Etching and aquatint on paper

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A reworking of the series 'A Rake's Progress' by 18th-century artist William Hogarth, this print shows Hockney's idea of chaos. Figures are listening to identical radios but are isolated. Sound, in this image, does not result in meaningful connection.

The headsets were inspired by ones Hockney saw in New York that he mistook for hearing aids. Later, in the 1970s, Hockney started to use these aids himself. He found that while his hearing worsened he started to perceive the world in new ways and his sense of space improved.

Francisco Goya (1746–1828)

## **No Te Escapares**

(You Will Not Escape)

## **i Que Guerrero !**

(What a Warrior!)

No Te Escapares – about 1797

i Que Guerrero ! – about 1820

Etching and aquatint on paper

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There is a surreality to this work, a response to the horrors of war. In 1793 Goya suffered a severe illness, which caused temporary hallucinations and permanent deafness. When he returned to work, his art took on this darker tone. It was this later work that earned him the title the ‘Father of Modernism’.

Goya worked at a time when there was no national sign language, which may have contributed to a sense of isolation in his later work.

# Ways of sensing

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## **Co-producer's response to 'A view of Avon Gorge and Bristol Hotwell', by JMW Turner**

Turner was known for capturing landscapes and was known for Romantic styles with watercolours. What some might not know about Turner is that he used yellow for light and blue for darkness, which due to his frequent use of yellow “caused him to develop cataracts” later in life.

You can tell that his later painting style does change however, like most within today's society, his disabilities did not stop him from doing something he is passionate about.

This is something that I can relate to. Even though I was born with cataracts and had them removed, I enjoyed art and drawing as a child. Like Turner, as I got older and my eyes declined my drawing changed. But it really is about finding ways to still enjoy doing it and getting joy from it.

It's clear that time has passed, but people's love and passions are very much still in the present.

**Emma Blackmore**  
**Disability campaigner**



# Ways of experiencing

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**Just as senses vary from person to person, so do our minds and each one is unique. Each of us experiences and processes the world in our own way due to these differences. Some ways of processing and communicating information are described as neurodivergence.**

Throughout art history we can see examples of different ways of thinking and processing information. Often these differences were romanticised as ‘artistic’ temperaments, flattening them into their most palatable form. At the same time, this ignored the social barriers experienced by some of these individuals and the pressure placed on people to behave and express themselves in standardised ways.

Art can provide a release from these challenges, a way to process how we see the world and a therapeutic tool. It can also provide a point of connection. In art, we can find a way to share our perspectives and better understand different ways to view the world.

George Harding (b. 1983)

## **Pink Rain and Pain**

About 2017

Oil on board

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What do you see in this image? What shapes and forms jump out? Harding often paints through misty mirrors and rippled glass. The shifting shapes reveal how subjective our view can be.

As an artist who has previously experienced mental health difficulties, Harding believes art can be a source of strength that helps us express and transform our struggles. Throughout his work Harding challenges and re-frames negative portrayals of mental illness.

# Anthony Jadunath (1945–2009)

## **1: Animals**

## **2: Rabbit**

## **3: Elephant**

1984

Ink on plywood

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At the age of nine, Jadunath arrived in the UK from Trinidad, following his father's death. As a teenager he had a breakdown and was hospitalised for the first time. It was during his hospital stays he taught himself to paint as a therapy.

Back at home he continued to create vivid images, using a variety of materials such as paint, ink and 12-pence rolls of paper. He made art for the rest of his life, often working with organisations like the Barbican and Outsider Archive.



# Anthony Rossiter (1926–2000)

## **Kissing Shoes and Dying Flowers**

1960

Oil on canvas

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From brushes to flowers to an old pair of shoes, Rossiter saw a brilliant life force in ordinary objects. He lived with bipolar and was often in hospital, where he used this time to channel his highs and lows through close object studies.

His emotive works and writing received critical acclaim. As well as this professional success, he helped develop new talent, teaching students at the Royal West of England Academy of Art in Bristol.

# Ways of experiencing

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## Co-producer's response to 'Pink Rain and Pain', by George Harding

To me, this piece depicts the isolation that people with disabilities can often feel. I see a group of blue figures huddled together and the green figure who Harding's use of distinct colour and distance mark out as other from the group.

As a person living with a physical disability, I have felt this alienation at times, and the pain we experience, represented here by the hellish rainstorm that bathes the scene, can often leave us feeling alone and unheard. Harding's thick and abstract brushwork emphasises how all encompassing this pain and isolation can feel.

Another way to read this piece is to see all the figures as people with disabilities, as they are all sheltering from the same rain. In this light the piece underscores the need for solidarity between people

of different disabilities and recognition that though at times we may struggle, that weight is easier to carry when shared together.

**Jesse Cooper**  
**Artist**



# Ways of presenting

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**How are we viewed when we are in public?**

**Too often those with physical impairments or differences have been objectified and seen as a curiosity. Patrick Cotter O'Brien, Sarah Biffin and Joseph Boruwlaski each experienced this, whether in the royal courts of Europe or local country fairs.**

Each of these individuals went on to their own creative endeavours, as a musician, performer or painter. They sought to take control of their image and free themselves from objectifying eyes. Over time attitudes can shift, helping people be seen fully: Sarah Biffin is now celebrated in her own right for her art.

When telling these stories museums must be careful not to contribute to this sense of otherness, by showing the object without the context of the

personal experience. Too often, the human stories connected to disability are lost, as in the case of the wheelchair displayed here. This reduces disability stories to a curiosity and continues to make Disabled people 'other'.

# **Glove and shoe belonging to Joseph Boruwlaski (1739–1837)**

Late 1700s

Leather

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Born in Poland in 1739, Boruwlaski lived in some of the finest courts in Europe – but at a cost. A musician and person of short stature, he enjoyed the pageantry, but felt he was simply seen as “an animated toy”.

After many romances and travels across Europe and Great Britain, he settled in Durham where he hoped to be free of the humiliation of touring. He monetised his many experiences (some of them invented) by publishing the ‘Memoirs of Count Boruwlaski’.



In: Downman, A.R. A.Del.

W. T. Fry. Sculp.

*Joseph Boruwlaski*

*Published Jan. 1. 1829. by George Andrews Pritchard.*

Portrait of Joseph Boruwlaski  
Wellcome Collection (CC BY 4.0)

# **Shoe belonging to Patrick Cotter O'Brien (1760 –1806)**

About 1800, leather

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# **Glove belonging to Patrick Cotter O'Brien**

Late 1700s, leather

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Clothes, shoes and accessories had to be specially commissioned for O'Brien and Boruwlaski. Clothing expresses our identity, and in a world that often 'othered' them, it was how O'Brien and Boruwlaski presented themselves as gentlemen.

Many people still face the same challenge. In some ways it was easier in the 18th century as items were often commissioned from specialists and not mass produced. Nowadays, Disabled people often customise clothing to enable greater comfort and self-expression.



# Samuel Loxton (1857–1922)

## **Drawing of Patrick Cotter O'Brien**

About 1900

Sketch copied from an original print,  
pen and ink on paper

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Patrick Cotter O'Brien was born in Ireland and forced into joining a travelling fair at age 19 due to his eight-foot height. Eventually he secured his freedom and continued to work as a performance artist, but on his own terms. A gifted performer and businessman, he became a celebrity featuring in many prints like this one.

In Bristol he carved out a life and formed many friendships. When he needed solitude, he would often walk the night-time streets, free from prying eyes.

# Sarah Biffin (1784–1850)

## **Portrait of a Woman**

1847, Watercolour on paper

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Sarah Biffin was a celebrated miniaturist. She was born without arms and with underdeveloped legs. She taught herself to paint using an adapted brush attached to her stump.

Initially, she was a fairground performer, but the Earl of Morton sponsored her to attend the Royal Academy of Art. From 1816 onwards she established herself as an independent artist and produced portraits. Her work was sought-after by royalty, and now sells for six-figure sums.

*With due respect to the Nobility, Gentry, and the Public in  
general, of Newcastle, they are informed,*

THAT THE WONDERFUL

# Miss BEFFIN,

In her way to Edinburgh, intends doing herself the honour of being  
exhibited on Tuesday, Dec. 1, 1807, and the four following  
days only, at

*Mr Henzell's, Long-Room, Old Flesh Market.*

This Young Lady is justly allowed, by all judicious Persons who have seen her,  
to surpass every Curiosity ever exhibited since the Creation of the World.

She was born deficient of Arms, Hands, and Legs. She is of  
a comely Appearance, 22 Years of Age, and only 37 Inches high;  
she displays a great Genius, and is an Admirer of the Fine Arts.—  
But what renders her so worthy of the public Notice, is, the in-  
dustrious and astonishing Means she has invented and practised, in  
obtaining the Use of the Needle, Scissars, Pen, Pencils, &c. wherein  
she is extremely adroit; she can cut out, and make any part of her  
own Cloaths; sews extremely neat, and in a most wonderful Man-  
ner; writes well.—The inexpressible Improvement MISS BEFFIN  
has made in the polite Art of Drawing and Miniature Painting, is  
truly astonishing, even to the most eminent Artists.—The Reader  
may easily think it impossible she should be capable of doing what is  
inserted in this Bill, (all of which she performs principally with her  
Mouth;) but if she cannot, and even much more, the Proprietor  
will forfeit

## One Thousand Guineas.

*Admission 1s. Children, half price: Any time after Eleven  
o'Clock in the Forenoon.*

Embrace this Opportunity, as another may never offer!

Mitchell, Printer, Dran-Street.

'Miss Beffin' handbill, 1807  
Image Courtesy of Philip Mould & Company

# Sarah Biffin (1784–1850)

## **Self-portrait**

1847

Reproduction of Watercolour  
Image Courtesy of Philip Mould  
and Company

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This self-portrait, produced in her fifties, shows how Biffin used clothing to express her identity as a gentlewoman artist. In all her self-portraits Biffin portrayed herself as a woman of fashion, as in this structured gown with magnificent matching hat. Her clothes seem worlds away from the fairs where she started her career.

Unknown maker

## **Home-made wheelchair**

Mid-1900s

Wooden Windsor kitchen chair with pram wheels

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We don't know the name of this wheelchair's owner, but we can see sparks of their personality in the design and blue and cherry-red paint. Records suggest it was made in Bristol for a young girl by a family member who adapted a kitchen chair with pram wheels.

This customisation is something many wheelchair users do today, in order to bring their own identity to their assistive technology.

# Ways of presenting

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## **Co-producer's response to shoes owned by Patrick Cotter O'Brien and Joseph Boruwlaski**

There are two shoes, one very large, one small. The difference is obvious and quite striking. I can imagine the two characters wearing the shoes, they look funny together, one extremely tall, the other very short. They walk together down a street, quite happy and smiling.

The large shoe is hard to the touch, it is well worn and is obviously part of a well loved pair. It is black and has a small heel, the owner doesn't need a large heel, he is large enough without. It is, of course, a man's shoe, a giant.

The smaller shoe could be a child's, but is not. It is also well loved, a partner to the larger one. It is flat, when it could be high heeled, to make its wearer taller. The fact it isn't, tells me the wearer didn't care about his height, small and proud.

The shoe is soft brown and seems comfortable. The owner is comfortable in his skin too.

The two shoes tell a lot about their owners, to my mind anyway. They would have been friends and would have had fun together. Whilst others might have felt sympathy for them, they themselves would feel quite comfortable with their lot, they were striking and proud of that. All this from two shoes.

**Phil Gingell**  
**Disabled activist**



# Ways of crafting

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**The objects in this section are examples of brilliant craftsmanship. Yet, despite requiring such skill, crafts have often been dismissed and seen as separate from art, somehow lesser. Why this dismissal? Partly because crafts were made by women and Disabled people.**

Weaving, woodworking and beading were just some of the crafts that Disabled people made in the 18- and 1900s. Institutions such as the 'Bristol Guild of the Handicapped' provided a space for individuals to earn a living producing these wares. They fetched a high price due to their quality. Yet at the same time they could be limiting, segregating Disabled people and defining their value by their productivity.

Nowadays, crafts are being reclaimed, both as a tool for care and as an art in their own right.

Contemporary artist Roo Dhissou, for example, uses weaving to explore stories of community, identity and rest.



Roo Dhissou, Ashokkumar Mistry  
(contemporary artists)

## **Making the repose**

2022

Video interview, produced for  
Disability Arts Online

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An artist and PhD researcher, Roo Dhissou uses a mixture of craft, cooking and installation to explore the formation of communal and individual identities. In this interview with fellow artist, writer and curator Ashokkumar Mistry they discuss rest, working as an artist with a disability and the connection between weaving and community.

This video is one of a series, titled 'Aaram' (rest), devised by Mistry and commissioned by DAO, to highlight the work of Onyx, a collective of intersectional disabled artists.

Unknown maker

## **Haberdashery basket with contents**

About 1940

Willow and mixed materials

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How do you learn? The person who made this basket would have learned to make it through touch and feel.

Across the country many visually impaired people supported themselves through crafts like basket and rug making. These goods were then sold in markets, streets or in specialist shops. One example was the 'Bristol Royal School and Workshops for the Blind' on Park Street, Bristol.

Unknown maker

# **Willow brake, basket-making equipment**

1900s

Metal

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The willow in the nearby basket went through many steps before it could be woven into the end result. Turning thick, solid stems into baskets, furniture and all manner of things was not easy labour.

This brake was used in the Bristol Royal Workshops for the Blind. Workers would strip the willow bark by rubbing the branch back and forth through the brake, a tiring and repetitive task.



Archive photo from the records of the Bristol Guild of the Handicapped.

Unknown maker

## **Ornate beadwork choker**

About 1905

Mixed materials

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The ‘Bristol Guild of the Handicapped’ provided a space for disabled Bristolians to learn, train and come together. This necklace was likely made by one of its members with a visual impairment, using a frame to create its beautiful pattern.

Disabled people were at the centre of the Guild and it had one of the UK’s first purpose-built, accessible buildings. It was never Disabled-led, however. Its founder, Ada Vachell, appears to have hidden her own deafness, possibly due to social stigma.

# Ways of communicating

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**Whether it is performing a poem in British Sign Language, reading braille or speaking to a friend, there are so many ways to communicate. Through sight, sound and touch, communication helps bring us together, share ideas, create and express ourselves.**

The objects here highlight a small number of ways disabled individuals have communicated. These individuals adapted to an inaccessible world through tools like the hearing trumpet and created new methods like braille. Disabled writers such Johnson have left a legacy to the English language, shaping how many of us communicate today.

When you leave this exhibition, will you talk about it, and if so, how? Maybe you will write a Tweet, record a video or have a chat over coffee. Whatever way you communicate will have its own creativity and nuance.

DL Williams, Sandra Alland and Ania Urbanowska

(contemporary artists)

## **Bilingual Poet's Dilemma**

2017

Video

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How do you capture the joy of pun in a translation? Or the percussive of rhyme in a language completely different to the original? This is the puzzle that the poet DL Williams considers in their poem *Bilingual Poet's Dilemma*, highlighting the differences between poetic forms in BSL (British Sign Language) and English. Filmmakers Sandra Alland and Ania Urbanowska created this film-poem with Williams as part of *Stairs and Whispers: D/deaf and Disabled Poets Write Back* (edited by Alland, Khairani Barokka and Daniel Sluman for Nine Arches Press, 2017).

# Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)

## **The Out of Town Party**

About 1759–1761

Oil on canvas

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The first president of the Royal Academy, Joshua Reynolds was a hugely successful artist and moved in elevated social circles. This group portrait was painted for Horace Walpole, and includes Richard, 2nd Baron Edgcumbe, a childhood friend of Reynolds.

When he became deaf in middle-age he began using a hearing-trumpet like the one nearby. Reynolds identified as deaf in his paintings such as ‘Self-Portrait as a Deaf Man’. He felt his deafness improved his paintings, sharpening his sight and intensifying colours and forms.



# Hawksley and Sons Ltd

## **Hearing trumpet**

About 1900

Japanned tin

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Reynolds used a hearing trumpet like this one. You can see it is collapsible, allowing it to be carried to social events. The wide base magnified sound and funnelled it to the narrow end. Yet they could be frustrating to use, and the sound was not always clear.

This particular trumpet was made in 1900 by luxury hearing-device maker Hawksley to imitate East Asian lacquer work. It would be taken to events in a fashionable leather-and-silk carrying case.

# Samuel William Reynolds Junior (1773–1835), after Joshua Reynolds **Portrait of Samuel Johnson**

About Mid-1800s, Line engraving

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A deceptively low-key work, this portrays Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), a disabled man who revolutionised the English dictionary. It is based on a painting by his friend, the deaf artist Joshua Reynolds.

Johnson was born in poverty with Tourette's Syndrome, impaired sight and hearing. From a young age he was aware of the stigma that faced people who today would be recognised as neurodiverse or Disabled. He ended his early teaching career due to prejudice from others, struck out alone, and became a celebrated writer and journalist.

His opinions were unusual for the time. Vehemently anti-slavery and interested in women's rights and economic welfare, he lived in an unconventional household with a mix of friends and relatives.

Unknown maker

## **Page of braille text**

1964–8

Paper

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There are different ways to communicate, including sign language, writing and this example here: braille. Invented over 200 years ago, it uses raised dots to represent the alphabet. These are then read by touch, enabling visually impaired individuals to read the text.

This example was made in the 1960s to show the system to the children of a local Bristol school. Braille is still used by some visually impaired people today; however, many now use digital technologies.

# Ways of responding

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**Throughout this exhibition there have been stories of creativity in all forms and how people have experienced disability, D/deafness or neurodiversity. But these stories do not stop here.**

Throughout Bristol and the world you can find disabled artists producing artwork in new ways. And throughout the world you can find ableism, from underestimation of those with impairments to their underrepresentation in galleries and museums.

In this space you can reflect, learn about others' experiences, and create your own art. What will you create?

**Creativity can come in different forms. How do you like to express yourself?**

**What is one thing you will take away from this exhibition?**

**Are you familiar with Disability, D/deafness and Neurodiversity? What are your experiences?**

## **Make like Matisse**

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Matisse was known for his brilliant use of colour, form and shape. In the 1940s he could no longer paint, so embarked on a different form of art: collage, using pre-cut pieces of paper to produce vivid and exciting images.

You can stick these pieces, felt, fabric and more to this panel to make your own collage. Maybe you will be all about shapes like Barbara Hepworth or perhaps you can use texture like George J Harding?

So make like Matisse and we cannot wait to see what you make. Share your results with [#revealthecreativity](#) [#covealedreveal](#)

## **What is disability, and what is the social model of disability?**

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Disability has often been ignored by art historians, or, when they have considered it, they have made assumptions about the artist's condition and how it affected their artwork. This is usually based on the medical model of disability, which focuses on what is 'wrong' with a person, their diagnosis and their perceived limits.

This exhibition re-frames these experiences. The artists here all had different impairments and conditions, which in many cases influenced their art. But what disabled them was something different, it was the society they lived in, whether it was through physical barriers or through a society that ignores or marginalises us. These are the disabling factors that people face and recognising this difference is a concept called the social model of disability.

# Acknowledgements

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**This exhibition would not have been possible without the support and hard work of a great many people. Curating for Change and Bristol Culture and Creative Industries would like to thank the following people and organisations:**

Curating for Change Curatorial Fellow – **Jo Barlow**

Curatorial Fellowship Assistant – **Freya Purcell**

Head of Accentuate Programme, Screen South –  
**Esther Fox**

Curating for Change Project Manager, Screen South  
– **Emily Goff**

Co-production group – **Doreen Lindegaard, Emma Blackmore, Jesse Cooper, Phil Gingell, Ruth Pickersgill, Tiane Moxon-Riedlin**

## **Bristol Culture and Creative Industries:**

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Exhibitions and Displays Manager – **Steven Bradley**

History Curator – **Lee Hutchinson**

Public Programmes Manager – **Karen MacDonald**

3D Design – **Simon Fenn**

Conservators – **Amelie Drewdun, Helen Dowding,  
Eleanor Hasler, Frances Coles**

AV technicians – **Zahid Jaffer, Jack Evans**

Build technicians – **Steve Potteccary, Mark Hooper**

Graphic design – **Bristol Design**

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Audio description – written and performed by  
**Charlotte Whitten**, featuring  
**Douglas Walker**, with script  
editing by **Adam Elms**

BSL Interpretation – **Marcel Hirshman** (WealdBSL)

Easy Read Documents – **Kate Grant, Director and  
Editorial Consultant of  
Easy and Clear**



## Tactile Images – **RNIB Specialist Transcription**

This project was made possible with funding and support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and Art Fund, and with thanks to National Lottery players. Curating for Change is an England wide initiative delivered by Screen South through their Accentuate Programme.

#HeritageFund #NationalLottery



Art Fund\_



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

