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# CRIPPING INSTAGRAM:

## EMBODIED, CRITICAL, AND CREATIVE CULTURES OF USE

**ABSTRACT:** How do disabled and chronically ill artists and curators navigate corporate-owned social media platforms as self-authored disabled subjects and communities? Mobilizing concepts from crip theory and accessible curation together with discourse and visual analysis, and engaging with artists' and curators' views about social media platforms and selfie culture via interviews, this paper develops a conceptual framework that prioritizes the intertwining of emergence, endurance, and exhaustion in crip artistic and curatorial online practices. The potential for a radical social media disability aesthetics takes shape as a powerful but contingent and troubled matter of digital crip emergence/emergency, a mode of contending with social media's demands and violences through embodied automedial practices that foster presence, community, and creativity and contest the terms of social media visibility. This article activates this model by analyzing collaboratively authored Instagram accounts that feature residencies.

### INTRODUCTION: INSTAGRAM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

*A*long with Tumblr and Twitter/X, the social media platform Instagram has, since its inception in 2010, been taken up as a lifeline by disabled and chronically ill users who have adopted and adapted its photo editing, sharing, and captioning affordances for intertwined purposes of identity expression, visibility, and social solidarity.<sup>1</sup> Since 2016, however, Instagram content featuring critical political expression, menstrual blood, nipples (when coded as trans/feminine), disabled embodiments, or any content that might read as “sexually suggestive”—

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even if not in violation of the platform's Community Guidelines—is at risk of being deemed “not appropriate for [its] global community” or not “eligible to be surfaced” or “recommended.”<sup>2</sup> Shadowbanning (which targets accounts for restrictions, without notification to the account holder) and the filter bubble (the constantly changing algorithms that populate Instagram's “Explore” and TikTok's “For You” pages) target marginalized users through “algorithmic exclusion,” which systematically selects normative forms of identity expression while reducing the circulation and visibility of the nonnormative.<sup>3</sup> Over the different iterations of its infrastructure and its content moderation policies, Instagram favors normative embodiment and is premised on tireless productivity. In the summer of 2022, some of the most privileged users of the platform publicly campaigned against the Meta-owned company's profit-driven turn to TikTok-style video content and requested restoration to what was framed as a simpler, kinder, more open, and less exploitative era.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to this nostalgic construction, Instagram has never been hospitable to all. As scholars of social media have argued, the communicative possibilities of Instagram are shaped by norms of ambition, comparison, exposure, and the requirement to be “always on,” dynamics that perpetually knit users into late capitalism's demands.<sup>5</sup> The pressure to create short videos or “reels” to reach and grow an audience on Instagram is only the latest manifestation of the platform's underlying logics of competition and exclusion.

This paper addresses the tensions between Instagram's status as an uncrippled platform on the one hand and the histories of its creative, critical use by disabled and chronically ill artists and curators for alternative digital self-authorship on the other. A key objective is to honor “crip creativity,” a mode of artistic engagement with body-mind difference that exceeds and contests ableist ideology, including neoliberal imperatives of “overcoming” impairment.<sup>6</sup> It is crucial to consider users whose activities and participation on these platforms are not often represented, in part because they face barriers that mean they cannot or do not participate consistently in the ways mandated by platform capitalism. Despite this, resistant crip forms of self-and-collective expression do manifest,

in some circumstances, against the dominant logics of Instagram. To make this case, I prioritize embodied intermedial practices of inscribing networked selves and communities, approaching digital self-portraiture as “a cultural artifact and social practice” and bringing extant thinking on how art informs (and shifts) the social construction and perception of disability and vice versa into the domain of social media.<sup>7</sup>

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To foreground the uneven, fluctuating, and sometimes transformative effects of practices of crip inhabitation on Instagram is both to acknowledge and to complicate prevailing skepticism about the possibilities for solidarity and intervention on corporate social media platforms. Gavin J. D. Smith has, in a broad theorizing of “technovisual” subjectivities, emphasized the difficulty but also the counterhegemonic potential of opting out.<sup>8</sup> Critical health humanities scholar Olivia Banner shows how participation on the networking site Patients Like Me allows experiences of chronic illness to be shared, creating a “cyber-biosociality,” but because it is geared to treatment trials and fundraising, this structure of online interaction “attenuates” the possibility of a more radical political acting-in-common.<sup>9</sup> In their work on digital storytelling, Carla Rice et al. argue, differently, that it is possible to “unfold new disability ontologies in/through art” that contend with and differ from dominant “biopedagogies” that make difference either hypervisible or invisible.<sup>10</sup> Nuanced first-person representations of disabled embodiment and lived experience struggle to emerge within the social media matrix of normativity, spectacle, and depoliticization.

Cognizant of such critical perspectives, but aware, too, of the ferment of practice on Instagram (and other social media platforms), I consider how disabled and chronically ill artists and curators navigate corporate-owned platforms as self-authored disabled subjects and as communities in digital spaces of cultural production. Following Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer’s prioritization of “crip creativity,” as well as Eli Clare’s insistence on the necessity of contending with dominant institutions and ideologies and on valuing the “brilliant imperfection” of disabled/Mad lives and embodiments in the face of historical and ongoing devaluation, I center artists’ and curators’ interventions in the

existing terms of visibility along with their reshaping of the conditions of digital participation through an acknowledgement of what Johanna Hedva in their 2016 online manifesto “Sick Woman Theory” describes, recalling Judith Butler, as “infrastructures of support” that bodies require “in order to endure.”<sup>11</sup> On this basis, I posit a social media “disability aesthetics” that “prizes physical and mental difference as a significant value in itself,” a set of media practices and social relationships that contributes to what disability scholar and curator Eliza Chandler calls “new worldly arrangements that can hold, even desire” disability and disabled people, despite the limitations of social media platforms.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, rather than manifesting simply as enhanced or wider visibility, acts of disabled self-representation and curation on social media platforms partake of “dismediation,” which Mara Mills and Jonathan Sterne define as a disabled media “method” that “foregrounds the conditions of communication” and “embraces alienated or partial communication, reluctant technology adoption, targeted rather than wholesale rejection of mediation.”<sup>13</sup>

My starting point is a consideration of marginalized artists’ and curators’ perspectives on Instagram and of the prospects and the stakes of using, defining, and inhabiting social media platforms differently. I then turn to the embodied dialogism of Hedva’s first-person digital essay, “Letter to a Young Doctor,” to develop a conceptual framework that prioritizes the intertwining of emergence, endurance, and exhaustion in crip artistic and curatorial online practices.<sup>14</sup> This reframing helps me to put pressure on prominent theories of the digital and visual “baroque” that understand resistance in terms of managing and/or returning the gaze, and it supports my contention that the potential for a radical, disruptive *social media disability aesthetics* takes shape as a powerful but contingent and troubled matter of *digital crip emergence/emergency*, a mode of contending with social media’s demands and violences through practices that foster presence, community, and creativity.<sup>15</sup> Finally, I illustrate some of the ways digital crip creativity has appeared on Instagram in collaboratively authored accounts that feature digital residencies.

The paper highlights artists’ and curators’ views of social media as conveyed in interviews conducted for the purposes of the study as well as in published interviews and essays. Guided by an institutionally approved research ethics protocol, I take a reflexive approach to social media research that ongoingly assesses privacy and power, an approach which is crucial, as Moya Bailey has argued, to

engaging justly with marginalized creators and their work.<sup>16</sup> Beginning in 2018, I identified artists, curators, and accounts through my own social media use, as well as recommendations from friends, colleagues, and students, and worked to discern themes of identity, labor, and relationality in these digital archives.<sup>17</sup> I became especially interested in the phenomenon of collective accounts premised on hosting digital residencies because they constitute a more horizontal and intentional form of spotlighting than the mainstream phenomenon of the celebrity account “takeover,” where a highly followed account in entertainment or fashion, say, hands authorship over to an activist for a limited time. Collaborative and intimate, such collective accounts also had a clear public-facing status, although I have been careful to reference and reproduce only materials that I could confirm the artists continued to regard as public. As well, reading contextually, I attend to the passing of time, refrain from citing digital material that has been taken down, and heed instances of refusal and nonreply.<sup>18</sup> More broadly, I have endeavored to create ethical research relationships by securing informed consent for interviews, incorporating interviewees’ comments on drafts, confirming the public status of social media archives with creators, and offering reproduction fees for images. Due to these commitments, my claims are admittedly not definitive in either a quantitative or an ethnographic sense; rather, in deliberately building this study on the significance of “small data” and the paramount importance of a situated approach to ethics in social media research, my purpose is to trace creative and political possibilities.<sup>19</sup>

The Instagram accounts and associated websites I reference for Lutte Collective (@luttecollective) and the Toronto Performance Art Festival (@7a11d) were inaugurated in 2017; these digital archives continue to be available at the time of writing (September 2023). The interviews with artists and curators were conducted in 2018 and 2021 via email.<sup>20</sup> The extended time frame for this study reflects the interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation not irrelevant to the matter of disability. For me, the strains and losses of the lockdowns resulted in health issues that forced a slowdown of work. Conscious of the privileges (whiteness, job security, sometimes able-bodiedness) from which I benefit, I seek to position myself in solidarity, as a body-mind who requires alternative pacing. My hope is that this research, conducted over several years in a rapidly changing world and media environment, will be valuable to social media critics and users concerned to address the problematics of a social media platform that metes out exclusion, exhaustion, and harm while also serving as a

technology of creative expression and connection for disabled and chronically ill individuals and communities.

## **BOTH/AND: AMBIVALENCE AND THE PROMISED AGENCY OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

In her 2011 speech “Moving toward the Ugly,” disability justice activist and writer Mia Mingus argues that disability justice entails a “shift from a politic of desirability and beauty to a politic of ugly and magnificence.”<sup>21</sup> To embrace “ugly and magnificence” is to reclaim and flamboyantly honor those manifold forms of bodily, mental, and emotional difference that have been cast out and made shameful—not to feed into spectacle, but to pursue radical forms of shared freedom, interdependency, and intimacy. But what are the prospects for carrying such urgent, liberatory work via social media? In an October 2018 dialogue with Mingus, genderqueer fashion designer, performer, and educator ALOK framed their question about social media to Mingus as follows: “How do you feel about selfie taking? I tend to feel like selfies offer an alternative medium of self-representation outside of the dominant gaze.”<sup>22</sup> Mingus replied:

It’s . . . both/and. I understand the complexities of documenting your existence because no one else will. And we don’t exist in a vacuum. All of the conditions that we live in and are shaped by, they don’t just go away when we live our lives. Even within selfies, I still see people choosing to post the selfies where they look thinner, more desirable, more in line with traditional beauty standards. What I see happening with beauty in oppressed communities is that we create an alternative reinforcement, claiming that it’s revolutionary—but it’s a new cage we are all supposed to live in.<sup>23</sup>

As Mingus understands it, the desire to be perceived as beautiful is “a carry over from the ritual of the freak show,” a set of regulatory norms and practices of display built on “ingrained . . . disgust” for embodied difference.<sup>24</sup> Twenty-first-century social media platforms inherit nineteenth- and twentieth-century techno-discursive anxieties about, and expulsion but also appropriation of, the “ugly.” In their ingrained racism, ableism, and fatphobia, dominant social media image repertoires premised on “the aesthetics of human disqualification” perpetuate “visual injustice” through the negative affective coding of nonnormative embodiments and expressive modes.<sup>25</sup> Mingus is justifiably skeptical about

the extent to which social media, in its current capitalist form, can support resistance and radicalization. Yet the layered complexities of this interview point toward a range of experiences, practices, and innovations, and at the same time, we should take seriously ALOK's hope for selfies as a method of self-definition beyond cisgendered, colonial, and ableist norms, as exemplified in the trans-feminine South Asian aesthetic they have persisted in fashioning on their highly followed Instagram account, despite being repeatedly targeted by trolls.<sup>26</sup>

The conversations I had about this topic with disabled and chronically ill artists and curators likewise register “both/and” perspectives, noting reasons to stay on social media along with tension, disenchantment, and critique. The interviewees were Sandra Alland, a Glasgow-based, white, genderqueer, bisexual, and disabled writer/artist whose work has been commissioned by Birds of Paradise Theatre Company, Disability Arts Online, and Canada Council for the Arts; Hayley Cranberry Small, a cisgendered white New York-based artist who identifies as chronically ill and who is the founder and curator of Lutte Collective; and Sean Lee, a nonbinary disabled Asian artist and curator and director of programming for Tangled Art + Disability in Toronto. Asked about the role of social media platforms in self-authorship and community-making, they each expressed awareness of the conditions, affects, and risks of social media use; a sense of the impact of social media on artists' work; and concerns about the terms of representation and visibility for members of marginalized groups.

Social media use is, my interviewees emphasized, unsustainable and exclusionary due to the incessant emotional and physical demands of online labor, the difficulty of maintaining and promoting an online persona, and the lack of material and financial supports for disabled and chronically ill artists. As Small observed, “I have been very online since AOL Instant Messenger in the early 2000s, then I was very into LiveJournal, Myspace, Facebook, Tumblr, and now Instagram/Twitter. I find myself currently withdrawing from social media, however, due to how overwhelming it can be.” There are problems with relying on social media for community-building. Small continued, “We miss out on a lot of other people who do not use Instagram or those who are not tech-savvy, especially older adults with disabilities.” Lee suggested that they had become “more cynical” recently, from the vantage point of 2021: “When social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram first gained traction, I was excited for the possibility of curating a lifestyle to present to the public—reflecting on it, perhaps an attempt



to showcase stories of disability life in ways that are different or unexpected,” but the requirement “to compare our lives to each other, and our very public successes, took a toll on my own mental health and my excitement to post.” On a structural level, noted Lee, without access to money for advertising or promotion, it is difficult for new artists to break through in the current media environment. They continued, “It’s when capitalism and its inherent need for profit over community enters the equation that social media becomes co-opted and artists become left out.” Alland commented,

I certainly think there’s value in the way many people on Twitter or Instagram discuss politics, art-making, and life, and I follow many accounts like this. However, if an artist doesn’t have time or “spoons” [a term coined by Christine Miserandino that’s used by chronically ill people to express how our limited amount of low-exhaustion/-pain moments forces us to choose certain necessary tasks over others], it can be hard to maintain an ever-present online version of yourself that’s constantly saying witty or useful things. I think this is a really important point to consider with disabled, sick, and/or Mad artists. . . . Who has the *energy* to lead the movement?

Alland also underscored the potential for social media rhetorics to be opaque and therefore exclusionary: “It can be challenging for people who are writing/reading in a second language, and for many neurodivergent, learning-disabled, blind and/or Deaf people, to keep up with fast written conversations that feature abbreviations, slang, sarcasm, gifs, pics, and emojis.” When it comes to personal practice, Alland explained, “I often leave social media for long periods of time (weeks or months) because of mental or physical health, but I’m usually drawn back because I have a publication, event, or film to promote.”

Even as they critiqued platform norms, all three interviewees remarked on the value of social media within disability arts communities. Alland pointed out the flexibility and accessibility of social media, compared to in-person travel and attendance: “You can work from bed, at any hour, you can be brief. You can find community even if you can’t leave your flat. So there are pros and cons.” For their part, Lee emphasized that “social media is a powerful tool for gathering. . . . Digital ways of keeping in touch are valuable, [they] can allow us to feel comforted and together beyond geographic proximity and gives us a platform of expression where we may not otherwise have one.” After commenting on

the overwhelm she associates with social media use, Small went on to say, “But Lutte Collective exists solely online. Social media is very important for us as a collective. It is a space to share and boost posts for people in need. It is a space to share art.” Small highlighted the material supports that online communities make possible in a context of privatized medicine and insurance shortfalls: aid in the form of supplies and medications is exchanged among members of Small’s network, alongside the sharing of artwork and encouragement. Finding peers online transforms individual experience of chronic illness by linking one’s experiences to those of others. As Small put it, “I never knew anyone with the same disease as me until I was 26 and started Lutte. Now the disability art and disability justice communities are part of every fiber of my being.”

Finally, my exchanges with Alland, Lee, and Small surfaced concerns about the potential but also the difficulty of generating self-authored representation online. Alland observed that “the self-portrait is an important form for marginalized people, and the phone-cam selfie has helped largely in the democratization and accessibility—and acceptability—of such images.” Alland’s own practice leans toward self-portraiture with the aim of “centering the queer disabled body.” However, the “revolutionary” prospects are shadowed by cooptation: “the increase in popularity of BIPOC, trans, fat and/or disabled accounts and authors” and the rise of celebrity success stories raise the troubling matter of “how much they’re still conforming to certain stereotypes, or being filtered through certain gazes.” On the topic of digital self-portraiture, Lee summarized key tensions:

I have a conflicted relationship with selfies—while I think it’s laudable that those on social media platforms can now curate images that make themselves feel empowered, it is almost impossible not to be compared to conventional standards of beauty and aesthetics. In my own experience it was easy to become swept [up] in a desire to present an ideal version of myself on social media that put undue pressure on the reality of my experiences. As someone visibly disabled, the legibility of my own narrative was also of concern—could images be co-opted by able-bodied people who fetishize and exoticize my lived experience?

Resonating with Mingus’s critique, Lee’s reflection draws out the overdetermination as well as the high stakes of social media visibility for disabled and racialized subjects who have been historically positioned as objects of collection

and spectacle. If digital/social media has potential to foster disabled self-authorship and “new worldly arrangements that can hold, even desire” disability, then that potential is generated by and struggled for through the creative actions of makers working in an inhospitable media environment.<sup>27</sup>

## THEORIZING DIGITAL CRIP EMERGENCE/EMERGENCY

The themes threading through the interviews point to the importance of thinking through platform politics, the creative industries, and selfies as a situated social media practice. Following Mills and Sterne’s call for research approaches that “[center] disability and [refuse] universal models of media and communication,” I propose that elucidating the possibility of a social media disability aesthetics requires attending to the interrelated pressures and possibilities of online creative labor, platform norms, the semiotics and materiality of digital content, and the insistence of social justice movements on reconfiguring agents and audiences.<sup>28</sup> To facilitate this methodological intervention, I offer the concept of *digital crip emergence/emergency*.

The adjective “emerging” or “emergent” is frequently used to describe communities of practice, especially marginalized cultural producers, intellectuals, and activists who are laboring to transform and reinhabit an inhospitable world; “emergent” also signals the processes through which they become more widely visible. As artist and curator jes sachs reminds us, it is important to think beyond metaphors: “there are also actual vulnerable bodies who intentionally create art to disrupt the harms of normativity.”<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, a central goal of this study is to closely consider to the dynamics of interdependency, exhaustion, and degrees of economic, racial, and able-bodied privilege shaping the emergence of a social media disability aesthetics on Instagram.

To address these complexities, it is necessary to grapple with the structural fact that creative sector workers are not merely nudged toward Instagram; rather, Insta-presence has become compulsory. Art critic Alison Sinkewicz suggests that “the affective aspects of being an emerging artist are plain to see: the term [‘emerging’] is not so much a clearly defined career level as it is an all-consuming, potentially never-ending, individual identity. Artists, at all stages, have never stood so visibly—as brands, both online and offline—at the center of their practices as they do today.”<sup>30</sup> The prospect of “breaking in” on social media fuels

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the rise of “aspirational” labor, as Brooke Erin Duffy shows in her ethnography of fashion influencers; and compulsory (continuous) emergence is a fitting way to describe platform capitalism, in tune with Wendy Hui Kyong Chun’s insight that we are constantly “updating to remain the same.”<sup>31</sup> My conversations with artists and curators established how oppression is routinely obscured and deepened in the process of digital emergence. Interviewees stressed that the demand to be “constantly present” on social media, as Alland put it, constitutes a material and ideological barrier to disabled and chronically ill creators, affecting their cultural contributions, profiles, and livelihoods. But social media is indispensable: as Small reflected, “I would love to get off of Instagram and only have a website, but it seems incredibly difficult to put out new work as a small artist who doesn’t have representation. How would anyone keep up with my work, how would I get noticed?”

For a touchstone that can ground a more encompassing theoretical model, I draw the phrase “documents of emergency” from the subtitle of Johanna Hedva’s 2018 online epistolary essay, “Letter to a Young Doctor.” Here, Hedva reconceptualizes healing as a matter of justice and seeks a digital, dialogic form commensurate with this endeavor. Hedva writes, “I was trying to communicate to myself as much as I was to you and the questions you asked. If I could articulate something about healing to you, maybe it would articulate healing for me.”<sup>32</sup> Contrary to neoliberalism’s equation of achievement (of a state of wholeness) with the right to be valued and attended to, Hedva’s essay, designed to be navigated via a horizontal scroll rather than a conventional vertical one, models “a practice of bearing witness to all the parts—the parts that have been apart, are apart, and will remain apart—being here.”<sup>33</sup> I read Hedva’s use of “emergency” to talk about disabled and chronically ill embodiments as reframing the conventional emphasis on a singular catastrophic event and as instead drawing out other associations of the Latin root word *emergentia*, in particular

the notion of a “process of coming forth, issuing from concealment, obscurity, or confinement.”<sup>34</sup> Hedva’s letter radicalizes “emergency,” stretching out its temporality and making body-mind vulnerability the place from which they know, create, and communicate. Practices of “self-life-inscription”<sup>35</sup> on Instagram may manifest as crip “documents of emergency” when they are grounded in the intricacies and struggles of embodied life and adopt practices of reaching out to others.

Thinking with Hedva, I offer the concept of digital crip emergence/emergency as a critical response to canonical theorizations of digital/visual resistance to ableist/sanist and neocolonial technologies/archives, which have tended to emphasize not slowness and the horizontal, but the more overtly disruptive possibilities of the “baroque.” In digital culture studies, Anna Munster has suggested that “digital embodiment” entails a “baroque aesthetic,” one that confounds the Cartesian mind-body split by manifesting “relations of connection and difference” inescapably reliant on the unruliness of “anecdote, oddity, humor, and visual amplitude.”<sup>36</sup> For Munster, the digital baroque recalls and remediates the early modern cabinet of curiosities, with its fixation on “medico-scientific freaks and monsters.”<sup>37</sup> Critical disability and visual culture scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has identified the unruliness of baroque staring as a site of intersubjective and ethical potential.<sup>38</sup> She observes that staring is characterized not only by hostility (and its cognates contempt, disgust) but also by engagement (wonder, beholding) and the agency of “staring back.”<sup>39</sup> This emphasis on the “staree”’s agency—the potential for disabled subjects, the gazed upon, to “stare back” and in so doing assert autonomy, humanity, and agency—can be understood as an attempt to challenge the logics of surveillance and display that are the legacies of the prison, the asylum, and the cabinet of curiosity.<sup>40</sup>

For a social media analysis, however, investing hopes for justice in starees’ power to return the gaze does not address the exhaustion that comes with the relentless pressure to be “always on,” nor the harassment and censorship that marginalized users experience: persistence and resistance on Instagram and other social media platforms must be conceptualized anew. Revising Munster and Garland-Thomson, I posit “the slowing scroll,” communities of practice, and intentional infrastructure as pivotal to fostering forms of identity work and intersubjective exchange or encounter, and I suggest that these go beyond the

dyad of the starrer/staree encounter. Key here is Eliza Chandler and Esther Ignagni's concept of "creative interdependency." As they define it, "creative interdependency" is a "way of creating art independently-together" that "opens up new possibilities for making art beyond singularity, challenging notions of authorial voice, independence and collaboration"; it is a space of persisting together and not giving up on one another that can include struggle and friction, and resists conflation with neoliberal norms of accommodation.<sup>41</sup> Fashioned with reference to curation and art education, the idea of "creative interdependency"—and the cognate concept of "creative access," which understands accessibility and aesthetics as "entwined"—is crucial for understanding how digital self-portraiture can function resistively online.<sup>42</sup> With their prioritization of relationality, these disability arts concepts, similar to Hedva's emphasis on body-mind vulnerability as the grounds of creativity and communication, prompt me to replace the idea of a generic/normative social media audience with networked communities and their/our "affective encounters" with media texts that hinge on the disruptive qualities of "non-linear and non-narrative elements." Through "affective encounters," digital crip emergence/emergency opens mediation on social platforms to deep, sustained forms of the relational and refuses the neoliberal flattening and fetishization of participation and community.<sup>43</sup>

## **COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTS: ARTISTS AND CURATORS CRIPPING INSTAGRAM**

Artist residencies hosted by collective accounts on Instagram are characterized by dynamics of "intimate reconfiguration," wherein users not only deploy the actions made possible by platform design affordances but, through their inhabitations, effectively remake these spaces.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, building on Anna Poletti's reframing of autobiography as borne out of the "interconnection between life, media, and matter" helps emphasize how disabled and chronically ill artists are reinscribing/reinventing their own lives in and through automedial practices that are simultaneously personal (grounded in individual lived experience) but also assembled and curated.<sup>45</sup> Radical ways of crippling Instagram do exist, and they hinge at least as much on a shared culture of creative, resistant uses and on networked communities as they do on broader platform norms and architectures. Through a genre of collaborative accounts that operate as digital residencies, disabled and chronically ill artists have developed a

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digital aesthetics of their own that remake Instagram (against itself) as a site of digital crip emergence/emergency. Participating artists were tasked with posting images and captions under the auspices of the accounts for a defined segment of time, usually a one-week period, so that the resulting archives are, in effect, comprised of a curated series of visual diaries in which the artist documents their own work and process, tying in themes such as creativity, meditation, health, justice, access, and embodiment. Unlike the celebrity account “takeover,” typically a temporary and singular concession, in the examples I foreground, the entire fabric of the collective account is constituted by the community contributions. Discourses and image repertoires of health and disability build toward a feminist, crip version of the crowdsourcing phenomenon Poletti terms “collective autobiography,” but in this case a resistive version in which singular voices and images represent and resonate with shared struggles.<sup>46</sup> Collective accounts—and within them individual creators—imagine creativity and care as intertwined. Operating beyond the dyad (starrer/staree, artist/audience), they accord with Hedva’s invitation to devise “documents of emergency” that instantiate through their crip audience-making a different “political future for the social body.”<sup>47</sup> Relational self-representation on Instagram departs significantly from the imperatives of neoliberal self-promotion, self-improvement, and image management: not updating to remain or attain the same but updating to connect and disrupt. Such innovations are possible because in the collective digital residency accounts that I reference, the structure of temporary “host” or “resident” positions creates conditions for crip forms of digital exhibition and archiving guided by principles of autonomy and interdependence.

Lutte Collective (@luttecollective) is a collaboratively authored Instagram account and a website where automedia and digital disability aesthetics meet.

Established in February 2017 by Hayley Cranberry Small and on hiatus since early 2022, Lutte's declared mandate is to build a community of "disabled and chronically ill artists."<sup>48</sup> The guest residencies of @luttecollective occurred monthly and lasted for a week. The project combines self-documentation with assembly and offers a platform for emerging artists to raise their profiles in an environment of peer support.

Shannon Finnegan's April 2018 Lutte residency fuses digital self-portraiture with the "creative interdependency" that @luttecollective fosters.<sup>49</sup> The initial profile image of the artist and their introductory biographical blurb not only identify them as a disabled white artist diagnosed with cerebral palsy, but these framing elements emphasize multiple aspects of the struggle for accessibility in the museum world and by literal and metaphorical extension in online exhibition spaces as well. The caption offers an "image description" in square brackets that reads "shannon sits on a blue bench, which is one of [their] artworks. in the second photo you can see it reads 'i'd rather be sitting. sit if you agree.'" The bench lettering, pose, mise-en-scène, and image caption work together to convey and materialize the very supports—alt-text, seating, attitudinal and ideological shifts—they are arguing for as integral to access. And the hashtags "#chronicillness #chronicpain #cerebralpalsy #sickasheck #disability #disable-dartist #disabledandcute #eyebeamnyc #disabled" link this public, collective account to multiple online conversations and extend the digital presence of the artist's ongoing projects, including the #AntiStairsClubLounge action through which Finnegan and participants intervened in New York City's inaccessible event space The Vessel.

Throughout the residency, text plays a powerful role in communicating Finnegan's embodied struggle with access barriers, inviting audience identification with the lived and felt injustice of inaccessibility as a starting point for building solidarity. Another post featuring the artist's hand holding "an index card with a simple line drawing of a bench" is inscribed with the words "It was hard to get here. Sit if you agree." The caption says, "I've been thinking about seating and benches a lot recently. Breaks to sit really change my pain levels, so I'm always on the lookout for where I can sit. Curious to hear any of your thoughts about seating and sitting." Making their own practices of pacing and pain management more particular and pronounced, Finnegan invites the social media audience to "sit"—to take a rest and join in a dialogue. The ensuing





**Figure 1.**

Screen cap of a post from Shannon Finnegan's @luttecollective Instagram residency, April 11, 2019. This is a close up of the artist's hand holding a small sheet of white paper that shows a black and white drawing of a bench against a grey concrete floor. The words "it was hard to get here" are written in full caps on the backrest of the bench followed by the invitation "Rest here if you agree" on the seat of the bench. The artist's hand is white and their nails are plain. The visible part of the caption reads "I've been thinking about seating and benches a lot recently. Breaks to sit really change my pain levels, so . . ."

conversation is multilayered: Lutte community members respond, noting the shared and repeated experience of exhaustion and difficulty, as well drawing attention to how that inaccessibility is intertwined with the rise of urban planning/policing aimed at deterring unhoused people from resting or dwelling in public spaces.

The range of posts in Finnegan's series for Lutte additionally includes: a mirror selfie of Finnegan wearing a bright orange toque from the participatory protest action; an autotheoretical picture of Georgina Kleege's influential book *More Than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art*; and a digital image of a drawing "in light salmon pink with a dark salmon pink background" featuring the text "DISTANCES TOO CLOSE TO TAKE A TAXI BUT TOO TIRING TO WALK." That the latter "visual and word-based" work is titled "self-portrait: close but not close enough" suggests that Finnegan is working self-reflexively to experiment with and expand the umbrella of "self-portraiture," displacing spectacular beautiful/ugly images with inscriptions of lived and felt experience of pain, tiredness, and access barriers and transforming these mental notes into potential rallying cries and graphic posters/memes primed for both digital and material distribution. Here, attention is demanded by the text, which powerfully communicates (through its pithy description of repeated exhaustion) the artist's embodied struggle with access barriers, inviting audience identification with the lived and felt injustice of inaccessibility as a starting point for building solidarity.

To foster these self-representational possibilities and host these artist-community conversations, Lutte's project architecture and curatorial practice enact sustained, deliberate care in its arrangement of contributor-generated content, employing practices ranging from image-description protocols to self-critical reflections on white privilege, to content warning templates, well ahead of Instagram's March 2019 integration of the latter. As Small suggested in a 2017 press interview, @luttecollective and the associated online magazine share the premise that platforms themselves are not fully determining, but rather, as she puts it, "social media can be tailored towards your liking."<sup>50</sup> Small's comment on the monthly rhythm of @luttecollective are significant here: "I curate and interview one artist per month; however, there are often intermittent gaps in the monthly features. These gaps have come to represent the importance of taking rest and prioritizing health and bodies over productivity." Small notes being "on a hiatus with Lutte for the past 9 months [since early 2022]" and that she "doesn't know when she will start her interviews back up again, if ever."<sup>51</sup> From an uncrippled perspective, this hiatus might read as an inactive account, but through the lens of dismediation, Small's decision to suspend account activity is a situationally significant act of agency and self-care, a decision that evinces the unsustainable conditions of continuing activity on the platform. Such temporal interruptions of the aesthetics of "the scroll" suggest the possibility of a crip way of being online and offline with each another, one that is not totally governed by the fantasy of "updating to remain the same" but rather embraces the "out of sync."<sup>52</sup>

The Toronto Performance Art Collective's (TPAC) fall 2017 online residency series, called 7a\*md8 and hosted on the Instagram account @7a11d, offers another example of Instagram's resistant, crip possibilities. As the call for contributions framed this iteration of TPAC's 7a11d biennial festival, its mandate was to "highlight how contemporary artists use social media platforms to develop new performance forms and to find new ways of connecting with audiences."<sup>53</sup> In a blog post about the residencies, artist-scholar Delilah Rosier comments:

artists might challenge and subvert our business-as-usual use of the app as a means of performative intervention. . . . Existing simultaneously as archive and as a form of resistance, the project reminds viewers of how/when/why the camera and lens are un-neutral, and how online technologies inform our role as viewer, as spectator, as ally, as friend, and as participant.<sup>54</sup>

Curated by Golboo Amani and Francisco-Fernando Granados, @7a11d featured early to mid-career artists from marginalized groups who were mentored in performance art and remunerated through “commissioning and archiving fees.”<sup>55</sup> While @7a11d’s views/follower counts, like Lutte Collective’s, are modest, they are not insignificant, and indeed the scale of their circulation may be a condition of their intimate modes of address as well as a function of its locally sited, grassroots origins.<sup>56</sup> Let me illustrate @7a11d’s qualities of artist-audience connection and critical reflexivity with reference to two examples from its digital archives.

For her residency, Natasha V. Bailey, a white cisgendered artist, drew on performance and mixed media/sculpture to address post-traumatic stress disorder through a set of digital self-portraits. In an interview archived on 7a11d’s website, Bailey conceptualizes Instagram as a “performance tool” in that “users showcase a representation of themselves, an alter ego.” She notes that “fighting for the limelight” on Instagram requires strategizing about the timing of content, frequency of posting, and the limits of “the default 512 pixels by 500.” She explains, “I follow these rules, but I also attempt to create layers of symbolism and meaning in the hopes of making viewers stop for more than one second of scroll time, and absorb something that perhaps will connect.”<sup>57</sup> In the personal post that is recirculated along with her introductory biographical note at the start of the sequence, Bailey used a birthday party cone hat as a mask, captioning the photo: “creating an alternative duck face.” This reworking of the commonplace selfie posture of pressed-together lips establishes the disruptive force of Bailey’s series. Metaphorically, the artist is an unruly party guest, breaking the norms of cheerful, self-revelatory online sociability; the obligatory conical party hat is repurposed to compose a new face, an elongated Pinocchio nose or a bird’s beak, a mask that is possible to hide behind and that transforms the artist into an other-than-human figure, a mercurial, affectively saturated digital/visual/material entity.

Bailey’s @7a11d series as it unfolds is united by a commitment to symbolism and to variously textured materials that cover the artist’s face, with one or two eyes peering out from behind feathers, a ball of yarn, a sheet of paper, or quartz crystals.<sup>58</sup> Each of Bailey’s series of masked self-portraits lies on top of a second image, a large-format textual statement that is revealed through the social media affordance and habitual user action of the horizontal swipe: for instance,

swiping the image of the artist’s face, which is almost entirely covered by a sheet of paper, reveals a ready-to-erupt impulse: “I am one papercut away from shredd-  
ding everything.”

Three years prior to COVID-19 face-covering mandates, the masks fashioned by Bailey harness the uncanniness of the partially covered human face and social



Figure 2.

Two screen caps constituting one post in Natasha Bailey’s self-portrait series “Naturally Unnatural” for the @7a11d Instagram account, November 17, 2017. In the first image, the artist, who is white, poses with her head loosely wrapped in a sheet of white paper, shoulders bare and one eye peering out; the subsequent image reveals typed words in white on a gray background saying: “I am one paper cut away from shredding everything.”



Figure 3.

media's potential for generating "connections and dissolving boundaries."<sup>59</sup> Countering the binary logic of staring and staring back, Bailey's series makes an insistent claim for the audience's attention to the artist's fluctuating affective and symbolic states of being and to the actions of covering and uncovering as both protective and communicative of trauma. Audience comments on the @7a11d posts praise the powerful aesthetic and affective impact of Bailey's work and encourage her to continue with the project.

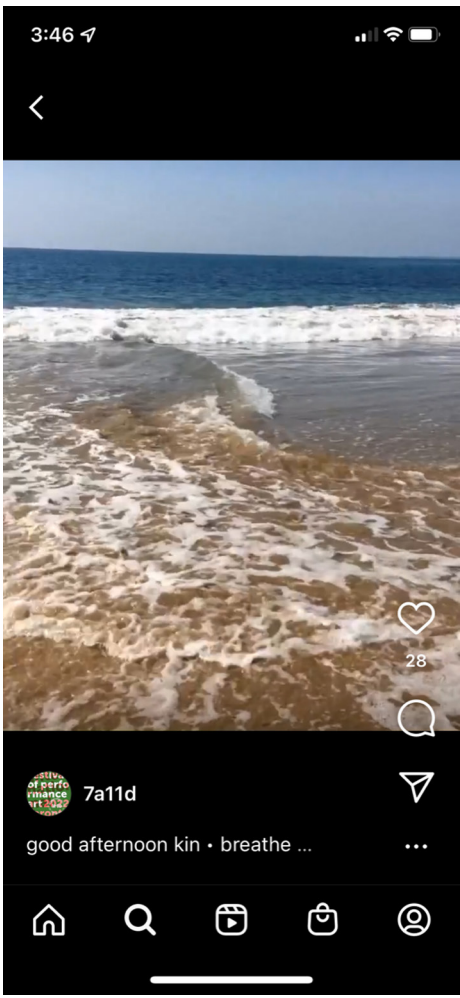
Artist sab meynert's archived residency materials on @7a11d and her published reflections highlight the potential and the risks of social media for racialized artists, especially those who experience themselves as "feminine" and "introverted."<sup>60</sup> From the vantage point of 2017, meynert notes that Instagram and Tumblr offer alternatives for self-authorship that redress the deficiencies of the art school and gallery business worlds when it comes to diverse representation.<sup>61</sup> meynert observes that "[f]olks who feel marginalized can determine how they are represented and disseminate their own media . . . giving it visibility, and developing one's own audience of interested followers and viewers."<sup>62</sup> Still, these are performative spaces, points out meynert, requiring that "identity" be "exaggerated in order to be understood" and that artists contend with distorting "projections." However, "occupy[ing] our space and reclaim[ing] presence" online means meynert can connect with fellow introverts; private messages bring them/her "messages of affirmation" and knowledge of "what the work or what the show or book I've completed has done for a person."<sup>63</sup>

meynert's residency honors the elemental in processes of mourning, healing, and grounding in place.<sup>64</sup> Paired with a short video (a proto "reel") of waves crashing onto a sandy beach in Sri Lanka, meynert's first post is crafted as an address, reaching out to the audience as invited and hoped-for relations: "good afternoon kin • breathe deep, from the brink, at the mouth - we're leaving. / the limits of an image can be transgressed by the tenderness of the viewer - if you would allow it." "Good afternoon kin" becomes a refrain for meynert's residency, insisting on relation-making as the aim of the work as well as on a diurnal pace of the artist's choosing, a dismedial rejection of the always-on pace of digital capitalism. Images are here wrested from the realm of spectacle—or what meynert refers to as "projection" and "gaslighting"—and remade as communal and multisensory, invested with possibilities for feeling one another's perceptions

and pains.<sup>65</sup> meynert’s process ceremonially surrenders “creative content” to the elements; the work-for-Instagram that emerged during the residency is returned to the earth by meynert, who addresses followers in intimate terms, inviting them into her process:

as you know last night I buried a big drawing that I had been showing you beside niigamigichgami [Lake Ontario] with the full moon at my back. / this photo was taken of me standing in its body with last year’s full harvest moon rising. • what does it mean that the environment shares our self-obliteration and expansion outward into it – even when we feel alone?

As she knowingly performs for the camera’s lens, for social media, and for the performance art community, meynert embraces ephemerality in our relations to one another, artistic practice, and the environment. Questioning the value that is attached to being “seen and recognized, acknowledged,” meynert resistively holds a space for creative practice, embodiment, and interdependency to be something more than what is suggested by the imposed or flattened value an artist’s work might achieve within the “attention economy.”<sup>66</sup> In the post’s caption, meynert rhetorically mobilizes the collective pronoun “our” to summon a community around their work and to invite that community to sense and organize itself as relational. To think of “our pulse” and “our work” is to envision the everyday life of the disabled artist’s body-mind as not only proper



**Figure 4.** Still image from sab meynert’s short video, which introduced her/their series for the @7a11d Instagram account, October 1, 2017. The image shows blue sky, blue water, and white frothy waves crashing on to a sandy beach in Sri Lanka in the tropics, and the visible part of the caption reads “good afternoon kin – breathe.”

to the individual but also deeply embedded in and potentially, she hopes, sustained by the loving, caring attention of others.

Lutte Collective's and Toronto Performance Art Festival's residencies suggest that a social media disability aesthetics linking digital emergence for creators to embodied states of emergency, in Hedva's *crip* sense, goes beyond participation and beyond the unsettlement of normative looking practices produced by the disruptive baroque effects encouraged by Instagram. Neither does this aesthetic hinge on the reflexivity and glamour of autotheory. Rather, a radical disability aesthetics of social media entails practices of performative self-documentation *and* an ongoing process of imagining and constituting networked *crip* communities as a primary audience. While artists' profiles are raised, these projects have placed just as much emphasis on artistic process and on audiences as tied to community (material, professional, and peer supports) as they do on publicity and its metrics. Exemplifying dismediation through their "targeted rather than wholesale rejection of mediation," these projects demand to be read as self-reflexively negotiating the terms of disabled and chronically ill artists' participation on mainstream platforms.<sup>67</sup>

## **CONCLUSION: CRIP REMEDIATIONS AND "INFRASTRUCTURES OF SUPPORT"**

The two collaborative accounts discussed here—@7a11d and @luttecollective—are not structured homologously: one is embedded in the performance art world, the other was born online; one offered fees to artists, while the other is built entirely on reciprocity. What unites them, however, is that both adopt what Hedva calls "infrastructures of support" through a processual and access-oriented curatorial practice.<sup>68</sup> These collective Instagram accounts demonstrate that there might be ways to inhabit social media that not only foster survival in a hostile world, one characterized by aspirational labor and the relentless acceleration of capitalist time, but also begin to remediate that world.

To be clear, this account of *crip* creativity on social media is not techno-utopian. Informed by the careful and critical thinking of the artists and curators I interviewed as well as by published writings and reflections on *crip* theory, aesthetics, and curation, I have sought to keep a hold of the contradiction between social media's community- and world-making possibilities on the one hand and its burdens, risks, and limitations on the other. Instagram and other corporate social media platforms are sites of discursive, visual, and material injustice in relation to disability, illness, race, and gender, where exclusion and appropriation continue

to be perpetuated. At the same time, Instagram has been and continues to be used for digital crip emergence/emergency, bringing forth “alternative digitalities” that produce “new forms of social, political, and ethical relationships” defined by creative interdependence.<sup>69</sup> Digital crip emergency/emergency is a way of persisting on corporate platforms that counters marginalization and exclusion beyond relying on prestige or on the fetishization of the participatory. “Crippling Instagram” involves individual and communal self-authoring, deliberate infrastructures, and the making and sustaining of relations, or, in other words, embodied, critical, and creative cultures of use.

“

***“Crippling Instagram” involves individual and communal self-authoring, deliberate infrastructures, and the making and sustaining of relations, or . . . embodied, critical, and creative cultures of use.***

”

Yet my analysis has also highlighted undercurrents of exclusion, unsustainability, and discontent. In the larger context of disability social media activism and digital storytelling today, especially as expressed in advocacy and fundraising work, it can seem like we are living in a time of affirmation—of increased participation and visibility.<sup>70</sup> But how might we attend to who is attempting to reconfigure how platforms might be inhabited, and just as importantly to who is left out or opting out? The fluctuating presences, tactical media use, and dismedial gestures that thread through these interviews and digital residencies testify that the conditions of participation and visibility on social networks remain constrained and insupportable for many of us in the age of platformization.

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#### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Lauren Fournier, "Sick Women, Sad Girls, and Selfie Theory: Autotheory as Contemporary Feminist Practice," *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 33, no. 3 (2018): 643–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2018.1499495>; S. Nicole Lane, "These People Are Using Instagram to Show What Chronic Illness, Trauma and Disability Look Like," *Bustle*, November 17, 2017, <https://www.bustle.com/p/people-are-using-instagram-to-show-what-its-like-to-live-with-chronic-illness-trauma-disability-3007370>.

<sup>2</sup> "Why Are Certain Posts on Instagram Are Not Appearing in Explore and Hashtag Pages," Instagram Help Center, <https://help.instagram.com/613868662393739>.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen Simpson and Bryan Semaan, "For You, or For 'You'?: Everyday LGBTQ+ Encounters with TikTok," *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 4, no. 3 (January 2021): 24, <https://dl.acm.org/doi/abs/10.1145/3432951>. See also Kelley Cotter, "Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram," *New Media & Society* 21, no. 4 (2019): 895–913, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818815684>; Jessica Sage Rauchberg, "TikTok's Digital Eugenics: Challenging Ableism and Algorithmic Erasure through Disability Activism," *Flow*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.flowjournal.org/2020/09/tiktok-digital-eugenics>.

<sup>4</sup> Jody Serrano, "Meet the Photographer behind the Viral 'Make Instagram Insta-gram Again' Meme," *Gizmodo*, July 30, 2022, <https://gizmodo.com/make-instagram-again-meme-kylie-jenner-tati-bruening-1849348057>.

<sup>5</sup> Brooke Erin Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017); Alice E. Marwick, "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy," *Public Culture* 27, no. 1 (2015): 137–60, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2798379>.

<sup>6</sup> Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer, "Cripistemologies: Introduction," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 2 (2014): 127, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/548847>; Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 8–10.

<sup>7</sup> Anna Poletti, *Stories of the Self: Life Writing after the Book* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 12–20; Theresa M. Senft and Nancy K. Baym, "What Does the Selfie Say? Investigating a Global Phenomenon," *International Journal of Communication*

9 (2015): 1589; Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 10–11.

<sup>8</sup> Gavin J. D. Smith, “Surveillance, Data and Embodiment: On the Work of Being Watched,” *Body & Society* 22, no. 2 (2016): 113, 125, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X15623622>.

<sup>9</sup> Olivia Banner, “‘Treat Us Right!’: Digital Publics, Emerging Biosocialities, and the Female Complaint,” in *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online*, ed. Anna Poletti and Julie Rak (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 213.

<sup>10</sup> Carla Rice et al., “Pedagogical Possibilities for Unruly Bodies,” *Gender and Education* 30, no. 5 (2018): 680, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1247947>.

<sup>11</sup> Johnson and McRuer, “Cripistemologies”; Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*; Johanna Hedva, “Sick Woman Theory,” *Topical Cream*, March 12, 2022, <https://topicalcream.org/features/sick-woman-theory>. For a self-critical discussion of “Sick Woman Theory”’s virality following its 2016 publication in *Mask Magazine*, and the way the essay’s fame may have hindered understandings of disability activism, see Johanna Hedva, “Why It’s Taking So Long,” *Topical Cream*, March 13, 2022, <https://topicalcream.org/features/why-its-taking-so-long/>

<sup>12</sup> Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 19; Eliza Chandler, “Disability Art and Re-worlding Possibilities,” *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 33, no. 2 (2018): 458–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2018.1445599>.

<sup>13</sup> Mara Mills and Jonathan Sterne, “Afterword II: Dismediation—Three Proposals, Six Tactics,” in *Disability Media Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Ellcessor and Bill Kirkpatrick (New York University Press, 2018), 368, 367.

<sup>14</sup> Johanna Hedva, “Letter to a Young Doctor: A Document of Emergency,” *Triple Canopy*, January 17, 2018, <https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/letter-to-a-young-doctor>.

<sup>15</sup> Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Anna Munster, *Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Moya Bailey, “#transform(ing)DH Writing and Research: An Autoethnography of Digital Humanities and Feminist Ethics,” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (2015), <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/9/2/000209/000209.html>.

<sup>17</sup> While I have aimed for diverse representation, it is a limitation of this article that BIPOC creators constitute only one-third of the interviewees and content creators discussed and that the residencies discussed to some extent enjoy the privilege of “prettiness.” These patterns reflect contingencies of consent and permission; they may also reflect patterns of white and femme privilege and self-promotion in the field of online cultural production, which curators have been working proactively to address in their intake and commissioning (see, e.g., Lutte Collective, “Submit to Lutte Collective,” Google Docs, <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdcvKfKUd2a0t7zePC48oGfg2KTNJaqc70t8Ygcavl-Liy8Cg/viewform>).

<sup>18</sup> Laurie McNeill and John David Zuern, “Reading Digital Lives Generously,” in *Research Methodologies for Auto/biography Studies*, ed. Kate Douglas and Ashley Barnwell (New York: Routledge, 2019), 132–39.

<sup>19</sup> As danah boyd and Kate Crawford argue, in a critique of the preference for large samples, we need to reckon with the fact that “it is problematic for researchers to justify their actions as ethical simply because the data are accessible.” I follow their suggestion that turning to the “modest scale” of individual case studies, where permission can be sought, can still “be extraordinarily valuable” for generating knowledge about social media. danah boyd and Kate Crawford, “Critical Questions for Big Data: Provocations for a Cultural, Technological, and Scholarly Phenomenon,” *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (2012): 672, 670, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.678878>.

<sup>20</sup> When quoting from interviews conducted for the study, names are used with permission. Interviewees had an opportunity to comment on a pre-publication draft of this article, and this version incorporates their feedback.

<sup>21</sup> Mia Mingus, “Moving toward the Ugly: A Politic Beyond Desirability,” (keynote speech, Femmes of Color symposium, Oakland, CA, August 21, 2011), <https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/08/22/moving-toward-the-ugly-a-politic-beyond-desirability>.

<sup>22</sup> ALOK, “Why Ugliness Is Vital in the Age of Social Media: ALOK Talks with Writer and Disability Justice Organizer Mia Mingus about Beauty, Body Positivity, and Ableism,” *them*, October 26, 2018, <https://www.them.us/story/ugliness-disability-mia-mingus>.

<sup>23</sup> Mingus, quoted in ALOK, “Why Ugliness Is Vital.”

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 22; Ela Przybylo and Sara Rodrigues, introduction to *On the Politics of Ugliness*, ed. Sara Rodrigues and Ela Przybylo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 5.

<sup>26</sup> ALOK, “They Extract from Us to Become Themselves,” blog, January 26, 2019, <https://www.alokvmenon.com/blog/2019/1/27/they-extract-from-us-to-become-themselves>.

<sup>27</sup> Chandler, “Disability Art,” 458–59.

<sup>28</sup> Mills and Sterne, “Afterword II: Dismediation,” 366.

<sup>29</sup> Jes Sachse, “Crip the Light Fantastic: Art as Liminal Emancipatory Practice in the Twenty-First Century,” in *Mobilizing Metaphor: Art, Culture, and Disability Activism in Canada*, ed. Christine Kelly and Michael Orsini (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016), 198–99.

<sup>30</sup> Alison Sinkewicz, “Dirty Words: Emerging,” *Canadian Art*, April 25, 2018, <https://canadianart.ca/features/dirty-words-emerging>.

<sup>31</sup> Duffy, *(Not) Getting Paid*; Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Hedva, "Letter to a Young Doctor."

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> *OED Online*, s.v. "emergency (*n.*)," accessed October 18, 2022, <https://www-oed-com>.

<sup>35</sup> Poletti, *Stories of the Self*, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Munster, *Materializing New Media*, 16, 42, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 11, 40.

<sup>38</sup> Garland-Thomson, *Staring*, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 116–17.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>41</sup> Eliza Chandler and Esther Ignagni, "Strange Beauty: Aesthetic Possibilities for Desiring Disability into the Future," in *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Disability: Looking towards the Future*, ed. Katie Ellis et al. (New York: Routledge, 2019), 261.

<sup>42</sup> Amanda Cachia, "The Politics of Creative Access: Guidelines for a Critical Disability Curatorial Practice," in Ellis, *Interdisciplinary Approaches*; "Sean Lee: Crip Resilience and Creative Access," YouTube video, 5:17, posted by "The Walrus," October 25, 2021, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky\\_kxk8Obb8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky_kxk8Obb8).

<sup>43</sup> Hedva, "Letter to a Young Doctor"; Marta Zarzycka and Domitilla Olivieri, "Affective Encounters: Tools of Interruption for Activist Media Practices," *Feminist Media Studies* 17, no. 4 (2017): 529, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1326546>.

<sup>44</sup> Sijia Xiao et al., "Random, Messy, Funny, Raw: Finstas as Intimate Reconfigurations of Social Media," *CHI '20: Proceedings of the 2020 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (April 2020):1, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3313831.3376424>.

<sup>45</sup> Poletti, *Stories of the Self*, 5–7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>47</sup> Hedva, "Letter to a Young Doctor."

<sup>48</sup> "About," Lutte Collective, <https://luttecollective.com/about>.

<sup>49</sup> "Featured Artists: Shannon Finnegan," Lutte Collective, April 2019, <https://luttecollective.com/featured-artists/shannon-finnegan>; Chandler and Ignagni, "Strange Beauty," 261. The artist has subsequently changed their name to Finnegan Shannon, but following their advice, I reproduce the name they used to sign their work in 2019.

<sup>50</sup> Small, quoted in Lane, "These People."

<sup>51</sup> Hayley Cranberry Small, email message to author, November 1, 2022.

<sup>52</sup> Chun, *Updating*, 10.

<sup>53</sup> "7a\*md8 Call for Submissions," January 15, 2017, 7a\*11d International Festival of Performance Art, [https://7a-11d.ca/festival\\_updates/7amd8-call-for-submissions](https://7a-11d.ca/festival_updates/7amd8-call-for-submissions).

<sup>54</sup> Delilah Rosier, "Residencies of Resistance; or, Performatively Flexing for the 'Gram," *Toronto Performance Art Collective* (blog), 7a\*11d International Festival of Performance Art, August 31, 2018, <https://7a-11d.ca/residencies-of-resistance-or-performatively-flexing-for-the-gram>.

<sup>55</sup> Golboo Amani and Francisco-Fernando Granados, “On-Line, On-Screen, Live Stream: Curating Performance in Cyberspace,” *BlackFlash Magazine* 35, no. 2 (2018): 36. While TPAC is not a disability arts organization, crip practices and themes are notable across the 2017 online residencies.

<sup>56</sup> According to statistics visible in 2018 (but that Instagram no longer displays publicly), @luttecollective and @7a11d’s “likes” reached as high as six hundred.

<sup>57</sup> Natasha Bailey, interview, 7a\*11d International Performance Art Festival, 2017, [https://7a-11d.ca/festival\\_artist/bailey-natasha](https://7a-11d.ca/festival_artist/bailey-natasha).

<sup>58</sup> Natasha Bailey, archived Instagram residency materials, “Unnaturally Natural,” 7a\*11d International Performance Art Festival, November 12–18, 2017, [https://7a-11d.ca/festival\\_artist/bailey-natasha](https://7a-11d.ca/festival_artist/bailey-natasha).

<sup>59</sup> Bailey, interview.

<sup>60</sup> sab meynert, interview, 7a\*11d International Performance Art Festival, 2017, [https://7a-11d.ca/festival\\_artist/meynert-sab](https://7a-11d.ca/festival_artist/meynert-sab).

<sup>61</sup> meynert, interview.

<sup>62</sup> meynert, quoted in Amani and Granados, “On-Line,” 40.

<sup>63</sup> meynert, interview.

<sup>64</sup> sab meynert, archived Instagram residency materials, 7a\*11d International Performance Art Festival, October 1–7, 2017, [https://7a-11d.ca/festival\\_artist/meynert-sab](https://7a-11d.ca/festival_artist/meynert-sab).

<sup>65</sup> meynert, interview.

<sup>66</sup> Marwick, “Instafame,” 138.

<sup>67</sup> Mills and Sterne, “Afterword II: Dismediation,” 367.

<sup>68</sup> Hedva, “Sick Woman Theory.”

<sup>69</sup> Munster, *Materializing New Media*, 172.

<sup>70</sup> Aya Yadlin-Segal, “What’s in a Smile? Politicizing Disability through Selfies and Affect,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 24, no. 1 (January 2019): 36–50, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy023>.