

DOING DISABILITY DIFFERENTLY

in architectural education and practice

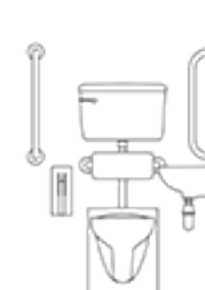
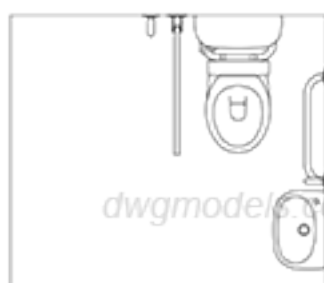
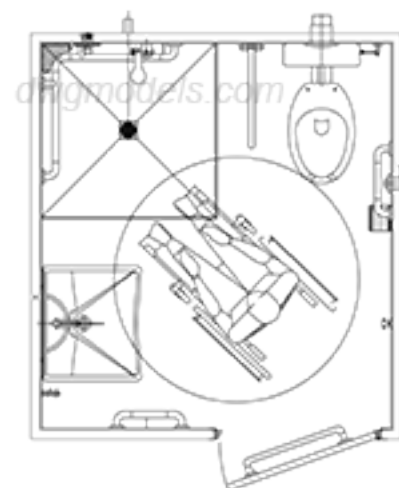
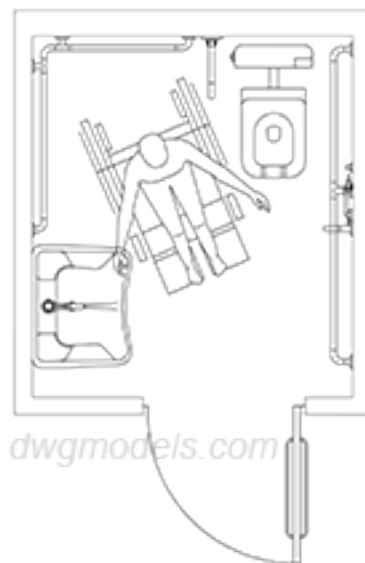
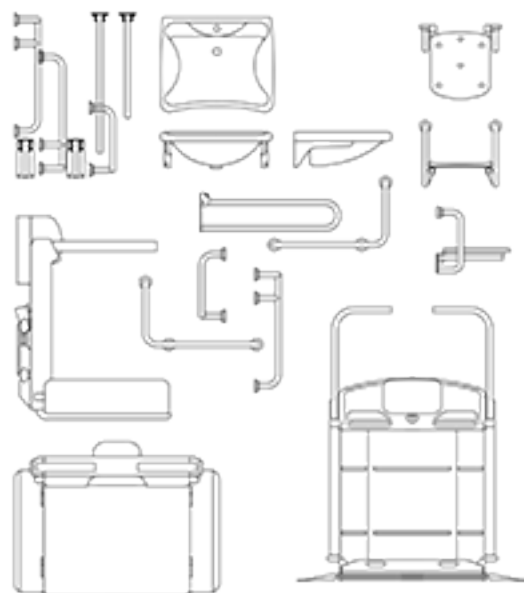
Dr. Jos Boys

Co-Director The DisOrdinaryArchitecture Project
Senior Lecturer, Bartlett UCL

The DIS/ORDINARY
Architecture Project

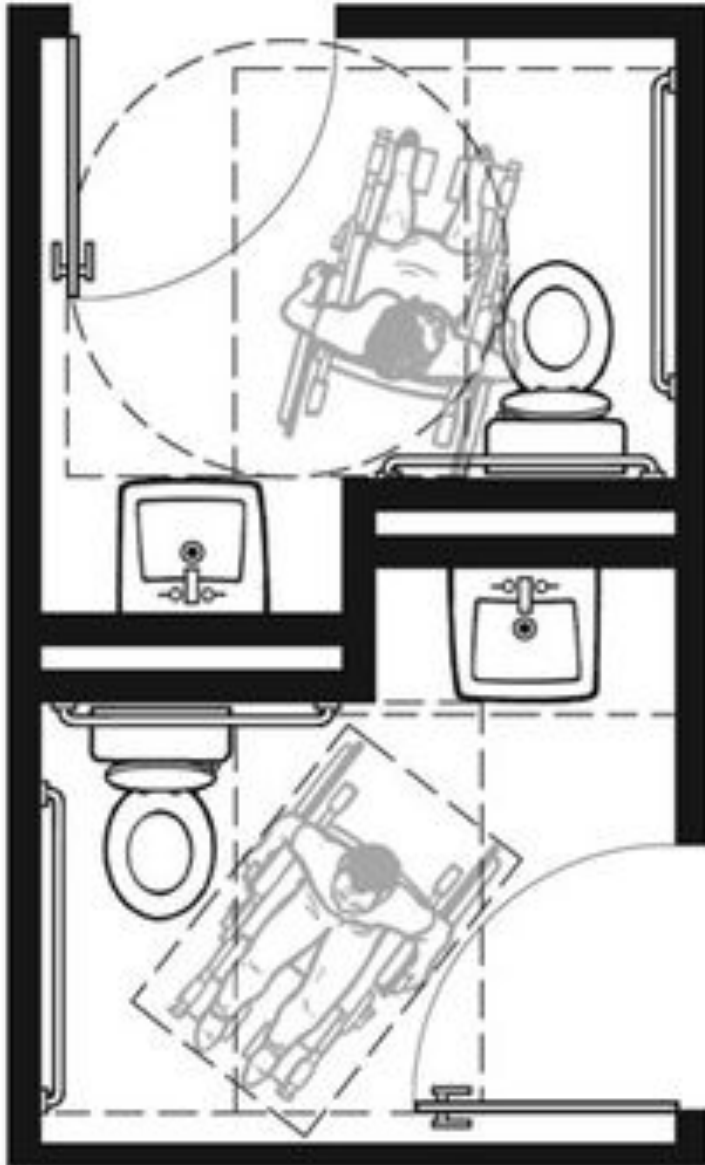
The DIS/ORDINARY Architecture Project

“To promote activity that develops and captures models of new practice for the built environment, led by the creativity and experiences of disabled artists”



Katherine Araniello and Aaron Williamson 2006 From *The Disabled Avant Garde Today*
<http://www.gasworks.org.uk/exhibitions/detail.php?id=217>





the problem...

Disability as a *fixed*, ahistorical and non-theoretical category

Dealt with at end of design process, as a *technical* and regulatory problem

‘Normal’ environments are *retrofitted* with ‘*add-ons*’ to make accessible to those who have already been excluded

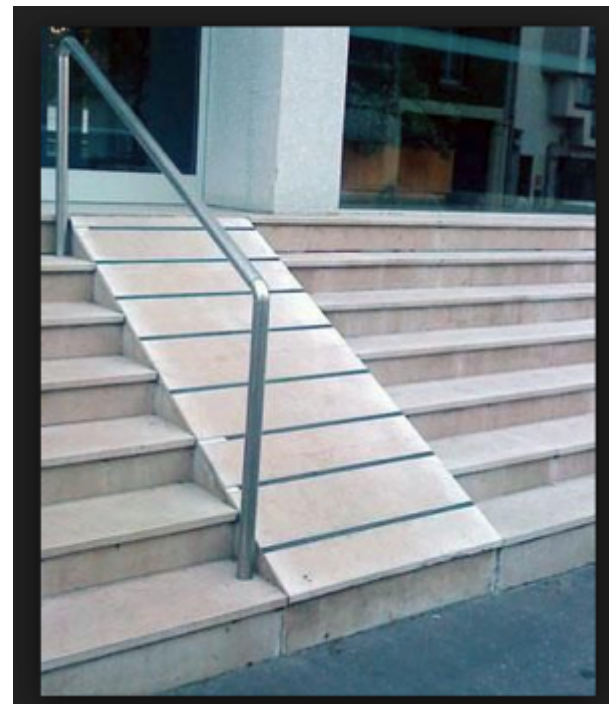
the effects.....

Designing for disability without the application of **brain** or ***imagination*** often operating at the level of ***appearances***



Little creative or critical ***engagement*** with dis/ability in history, theory, technology, education or practice

Continues to ***ignore*** disabled people's considerable ***expertise*** in negotiating the built environment



the actual problem (1) General attitudes to disabled people as
‘tragic’ and upsetting

An **acceptance** that it is okay to design ‘normal’ spaces first, with ‘special needs’ added afterwards

The invisibility of abled-bodied **privilege**

The tendency to treat access and inclusion as a **marginal** concern

The use of **justificatory narratives** to ‘explain away’ situations where access is poor

two big claims

1. Dis/ability is a creative generator

Start building and urban design *from* disability - from valuing the rich bio- and neurodiversity of different ways of being in the world.

Recognise that disabled people are already *creative experts* in negotiating the built environment

Start from the perceptions and experiences of *misfits*, 'unruly bodies' and non-compliant bodies, not of norms or averages.

2. Dis/ability is a powerful critique of 'what is normal'

Start from disability to *challenge* everyday social, material and spatial practices where these act to enable some whilst disabling others

Start from disability to investigate how architectural and built environment education and practice perpetuates particular patterns of *inclusions & exclusions*, and find creative and critical ways to change these towards transformative social, material and spatial justice.

changing mindsets

us

them

architects
able-bodied
active

us

self-contained
common sense
binary categories

clients and users
disabled
passive

them

architects
able-bodied
active

us

self-contained
common sense
binary categories

clients and users
disabled
passive

them

caring for them
empathy for others
inclusive design
universal design
disabled access

architects
able-bodied
active

us

clients and users
disabled
passive

self-contained
common sense
binary categories

them

~~caring for them~~
~~empathy for others~~
~~inclusive design~~
~~universal design~~
~~disabled access~~

embodied, multitude of different ways of being in the world, inequitable practices

dis/ability

access as an emergent, complex, collective
uneven and never finished process

embodied, multitude of different ways of being in the world, inequitable practices

dis/ability

interrogate assumptions about ability –**ableism** -
as well as disability

recognise disabled people as built environment
creative experts

critically & creatively engage with where/how
space acts to **disable** some and **enable** others
act towards transformative social, material and
spatial justice

[L]anguage recommends that we conceive of the able-body as something that just comes along ‘naturally’ as people go about their daily existence.

(Titchkosky 2002: 103)

1. pay attention



Fit

Unencumbered

Healthy

Mobile

Autonomous

Capable

Independent

Entrepreneurial

Attractive

Thriving

Able-bodied

Driven

Youthful

Active

Restricted

Fit

Lazy

Unencumbered

Disgusting

Healthy

Mobile

Incompetent

Sick

Immobile

Capable

'Mental'

Autonomous

Dependent

Entrepreneurial

Independent

Thriving

Scrounger

Attractive

Ugly

Tragic

Driven

Able-bodied

DISABLED

Shameful

Youthful

Active

Passive victim (or superhero)

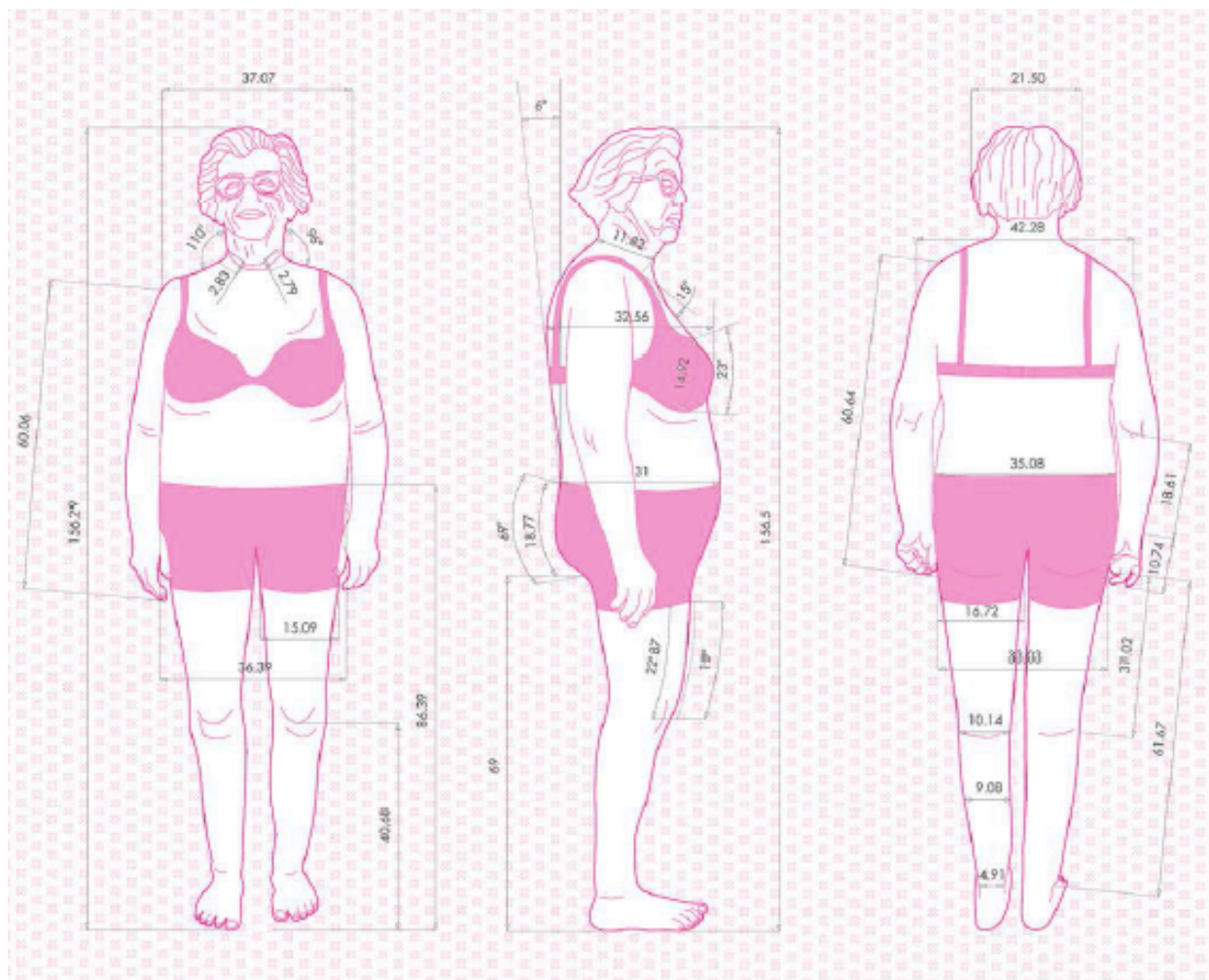
Less than human

the actual problem (2)

Social norms assume that our body-minds are **unproblematically capable**, mobile, unencumbered and autonomous, with no need for recourse to support

This includes a norm of **uninterrupted and fast motion**, unimpeded by others or by built surroundings; supported by continuous visual, physical and mental agility; with high-speed, instinctive and independent processing of, and responses to, immediate experiences and changing circumstances.

This is underpinned by an unnoticed and boundless **fatigue-free energy**; imperviousness to others and/or frustration as others' perceived slowness.



2. practice an embodied creative & professional practice

1% - people who are
registered as architects and
have declared an impairment

10% - at least the
proportion of the global
population with an
impairment



How do you fit in or **mis**fit in the world of architecture?



Where are you in the **privilege** game?



Have you learnt the **rules** of the game?



Diploma 12 2017-2018

World Building: Scripting Spaces

INIGO MINNS + MANIJEH VERGHESE



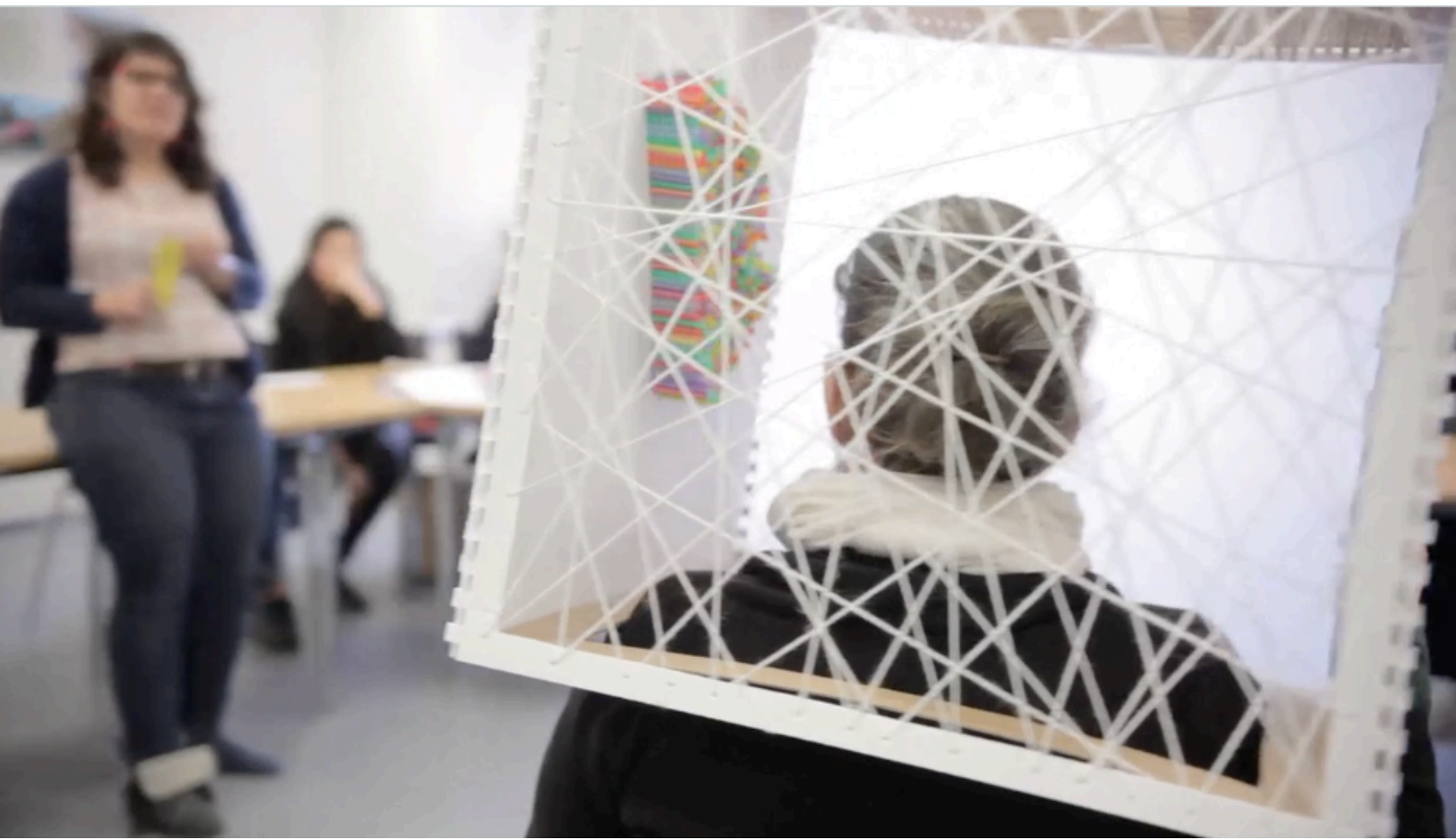














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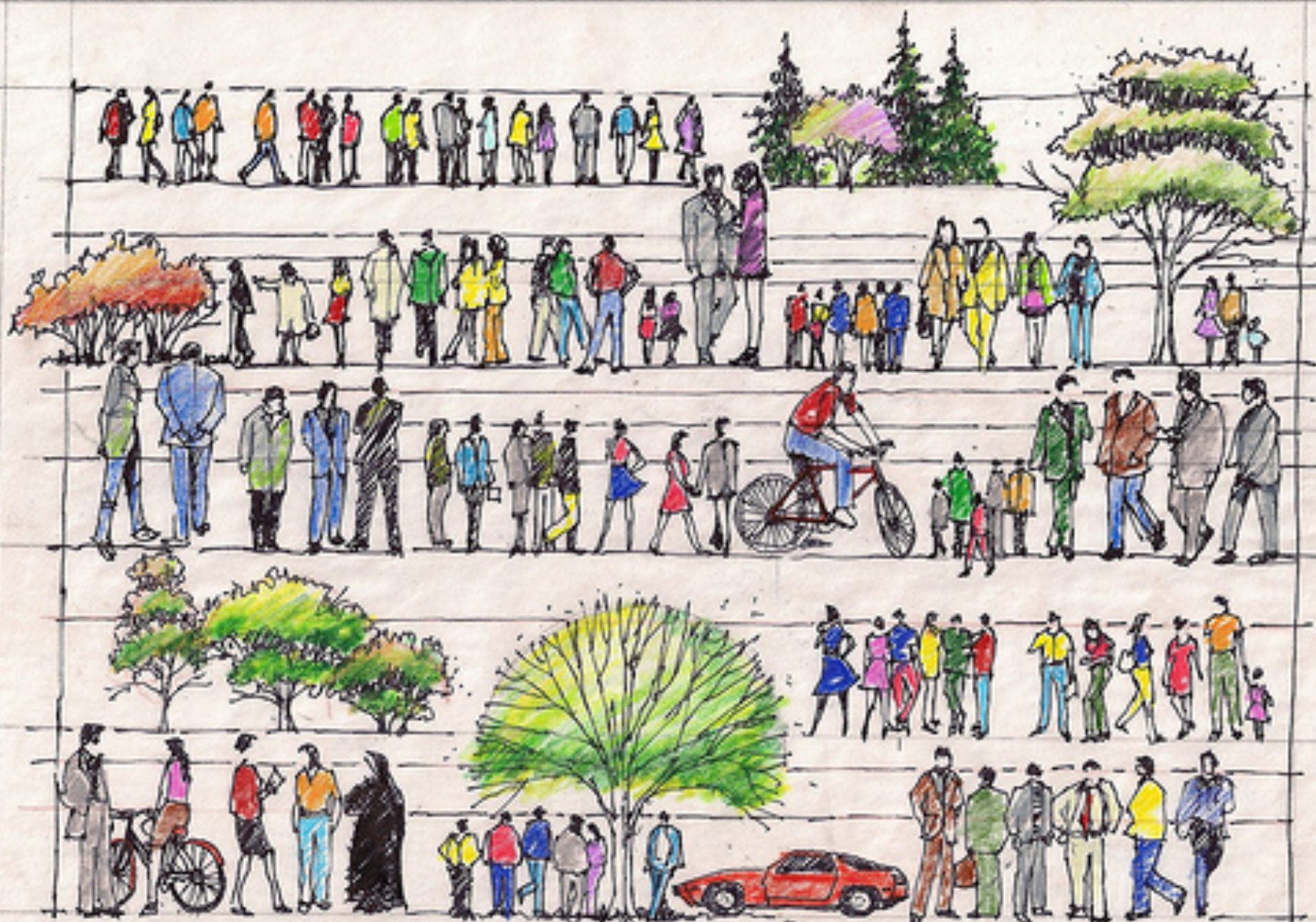
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DOING IT DIFFERENTLY

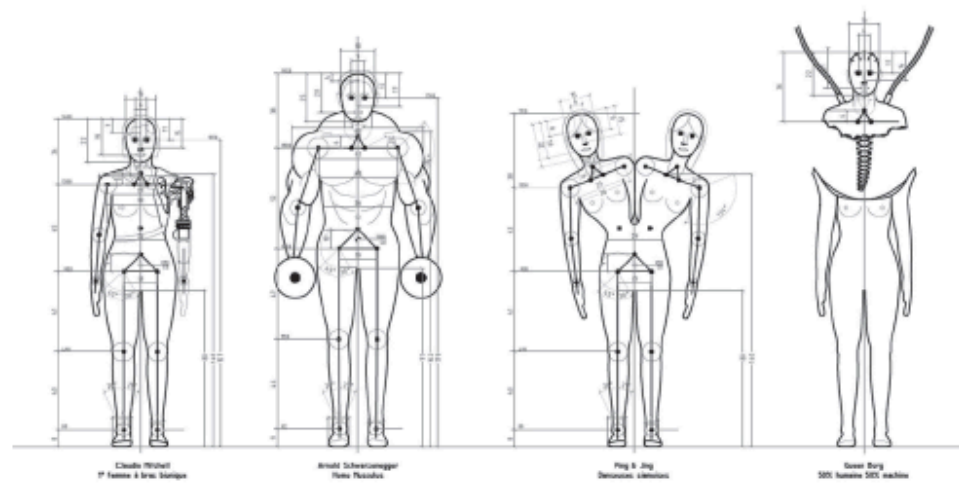
More from Tim Copsey



ENTOURAGE PRACTICE

OLIVER '10

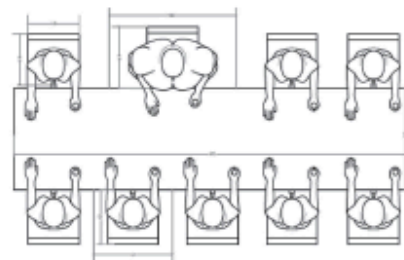




① Study prototype
100% 100%



② Anthropometric
100% 100%



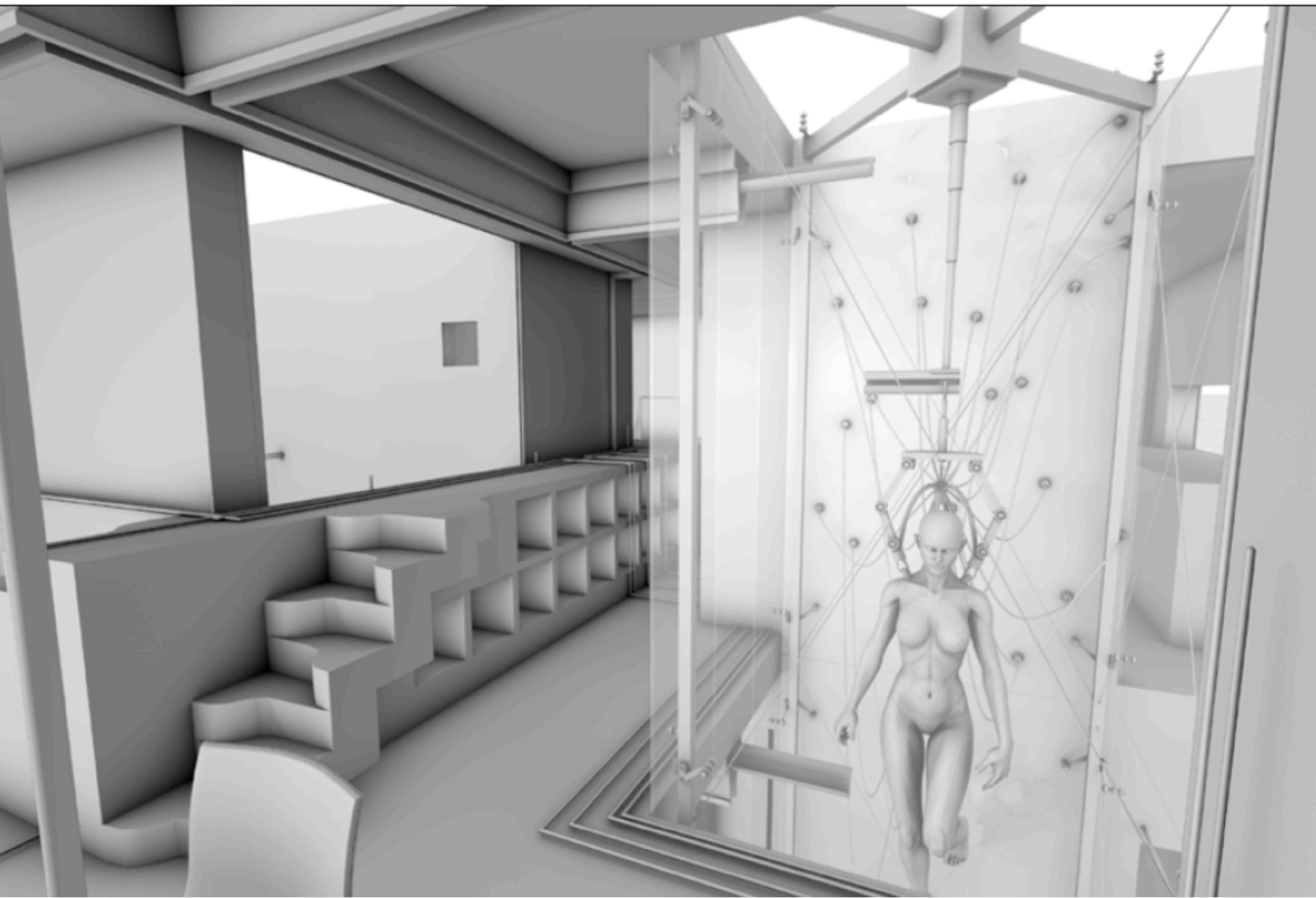
③ Chair
100% 100%

FIGURE 12.7 Thomas Carpentier (2011) *The Measure(s) of Man*: graduation design project from the Ecole Speciale d'Architecture, Paris. Reprinted by permission of Thomas Carpentier

DINING ROOM

A recomposed family with multiple singularities should be able to have diner together at the same table. So each chair has to be especially designed for a specific user, each one is a variation of the same initial chair.







3. Design from difference, from unruly and non-normative bodies



Sense of Place University of Brighton/ACE 2007







Sophie Handler: Aging Facilities – Resistant Seating Project



Primary Function:-

Traffic regulation (pedestrian/vehicular)

Secondary use:-

Additional seating (while waiting for buses # 473, # 300 and # 147)

Height: 635 mm

Sittable area: 227 mm depth (max.)

Fabric: cast iron cap with gloss enamel finish

Features:-

Public property



Backrest



Available borough-wide



Last used:-

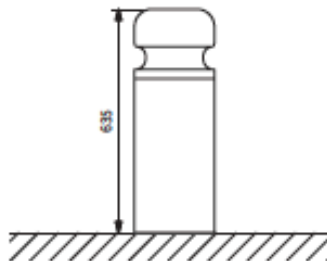
5 days ago

Location:-

Bennett Road bus stop, Prince Regent Lane



SITTABLE AREA



SEAT HEIGHT

1:20

A Crash Course in Cloudspotting (the subversive act of horizontality)

An invitation to pause. To listen. To rest.

A journey for the ill, infirm and sick. That is all of us. If not today, then maybe tomorrow.

An ode to invisible impairments, and to acts of bravery we don't see.



Audio Flyer 'A Crash Course in Cloudspotting',
Ovalhouse 29th Jan - 10th Feb

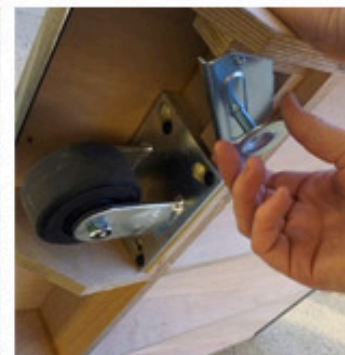
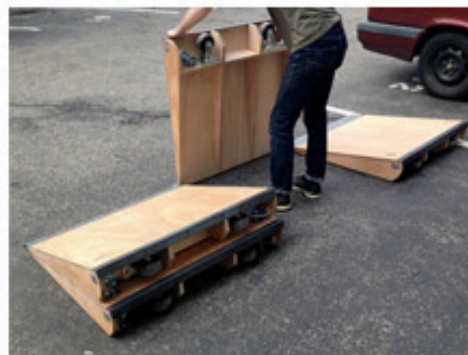
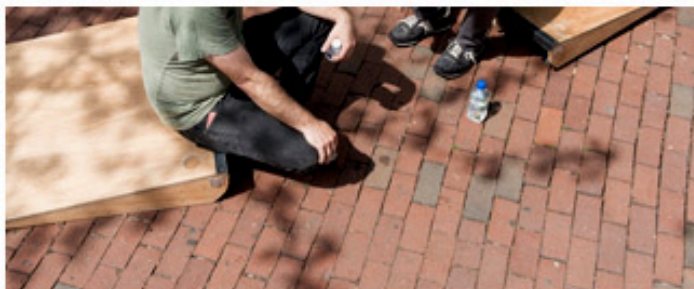
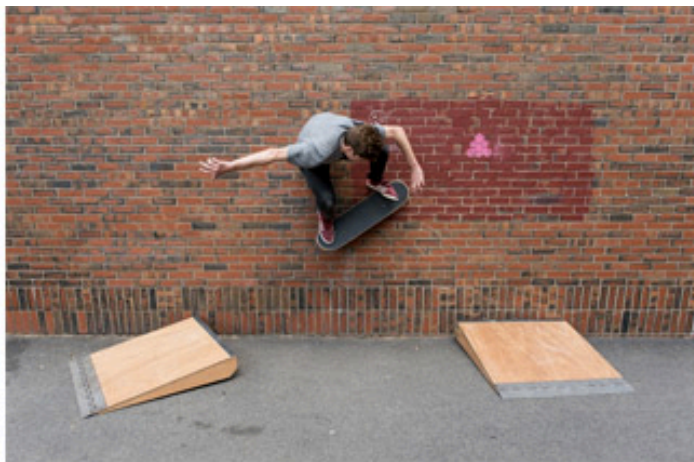


Audio Programme Note: A Crash Course in
Cloudspotting, Ovalhouse 29th Jan - 10th Feb

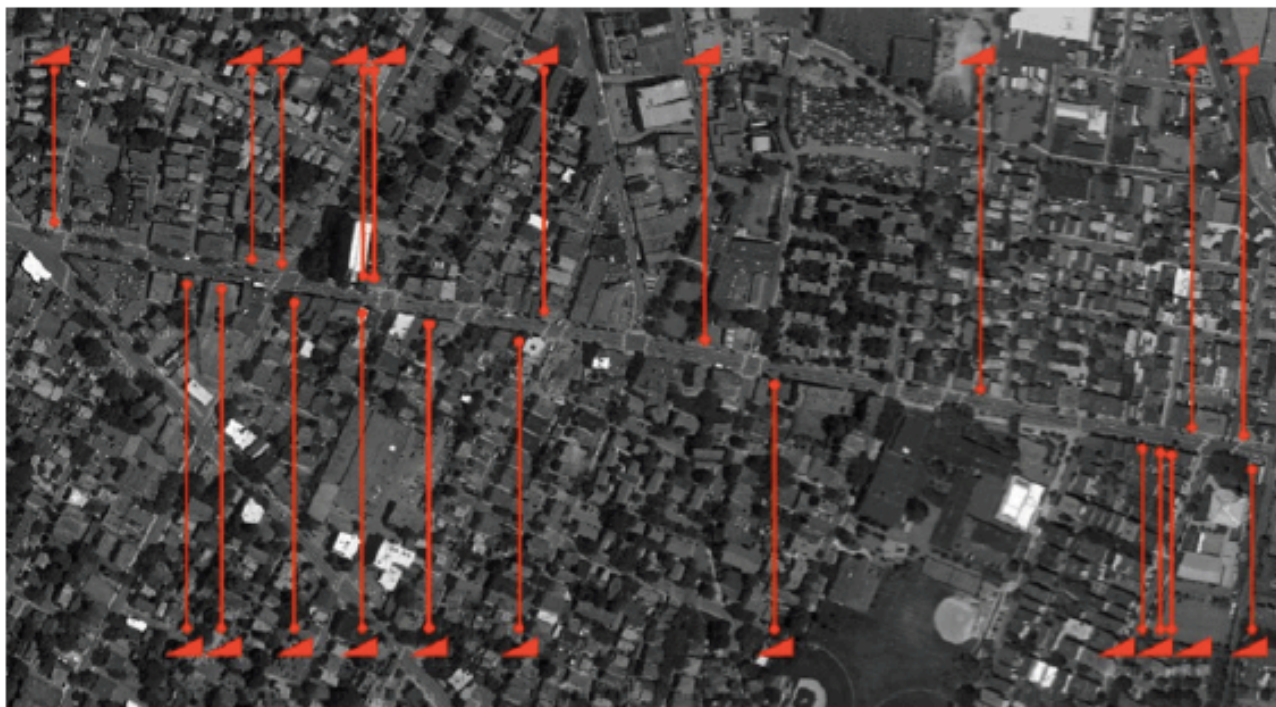








Sara Hendren *Slope Intercept*



In Toronto, Slope : Intercept was hosted by OCADU and Interaccess Gallery in a two-day workshop. We ran an interactive "audit" of a Toronto neighborhood, recording its topography in the company of a professional skateboarder and several wheelchair users. We created a provisional map of the neighborhood with real-time printed photos, and we gathered the skateboarder, a wheelchair-using ramp activist, a parks and recreation administrator, and an architectural theorist as a panel, asking them to speculate about the present and future builtscape of that city.





4. Redefine access as a collective endeavour

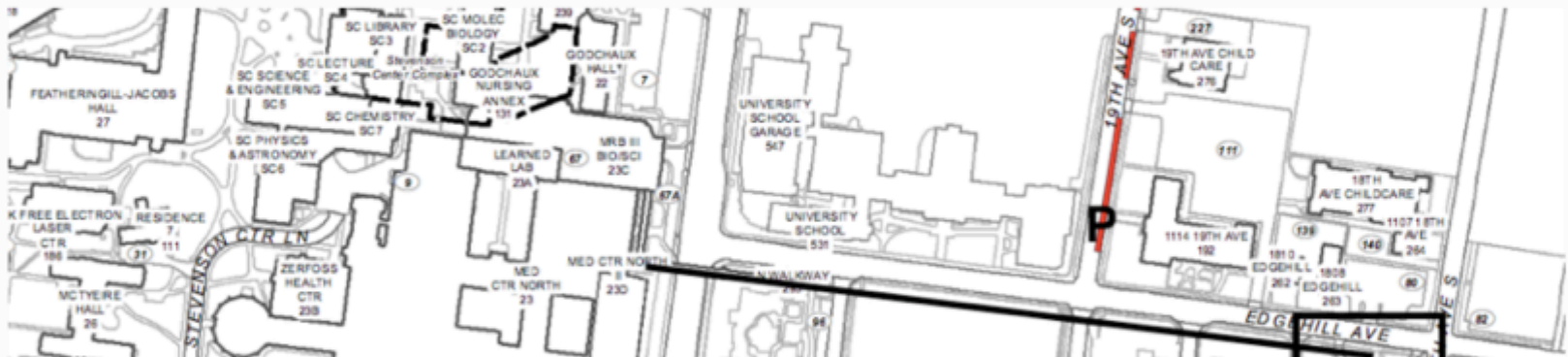
ACCESS IS L♥VE



<https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/2019/02/01/access-is-love/>

MAPPING ACCESS

HOME ABOUT METHODOLOGY PROJECTS COLLABORATE MEDIA CONTACT



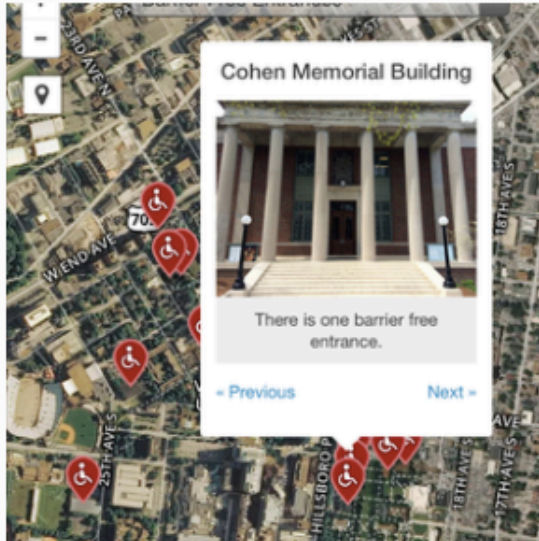
[Image: a black-and-white map of the Vanderbilt campus with accessible parking and routes indicated in red]

Mapping Access is a participatory data-collection and accessibility mapping project based in Nashville, Tennessee. Informed by Disability Justice, intersectionality, environmental humanities, and critical GIS frameworks, the project uses mapping as a critical tool for iterative world-building.

<https://www.mapping-access.com/>

COLLABORATE

Interested in getting involved with Mapping Access? We can help you develop content in the following areas:



[Image description: a screenshot of a campus accessibility map as viewed on a mobile screen. The map itself includes trees and buildings, as well as streets. Points of access (in this case, accessible entrances) are shown with red symbols with wheelchair access symbols on them. A pop-up shows Cohen Memorial Building with an image of the front (a brick building with columns and stairs) and a line of text that says "There is one barrier free entrance."]

CAMPUS MAPPING



[Image description: a view of a crosswalk painted on a neighborhood road in white spray paint by a group of tactical urbanists. the crosswalk begins and ends in front of curb cuts indicated by raised yellow bumps. In the background, we see a brown house with a green lawn and green evergreen trees.]

URBAN ACTIVIST MAPPING

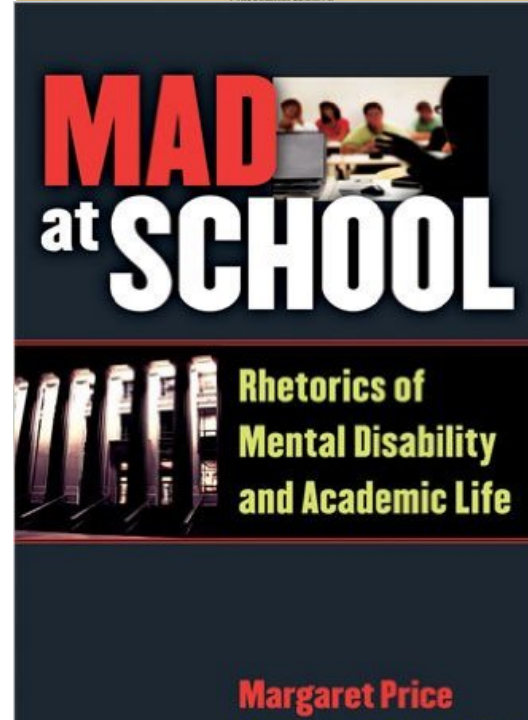
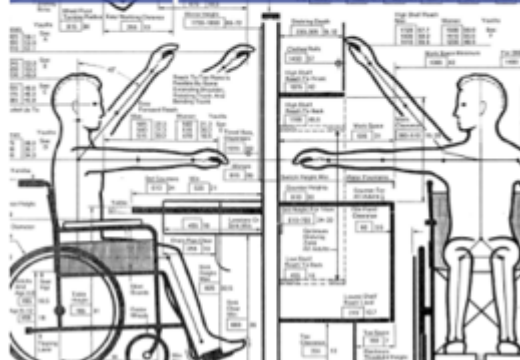
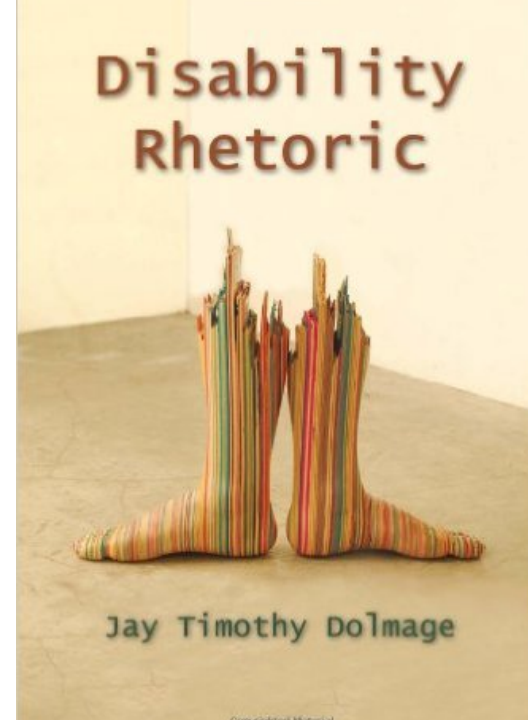
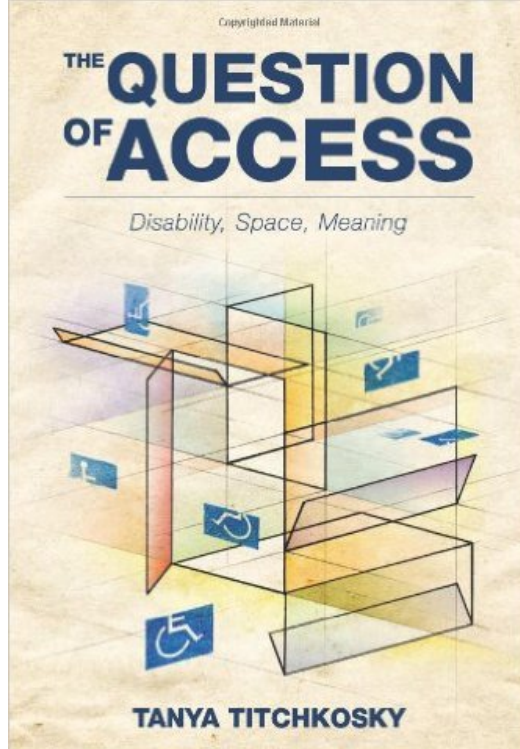
Mapping public spaces and developing spatial stories about public belonging



[Image description: a panel of educators sits in front of a projector screen, which shows a map with red dots. They address an audience of students who take notes in the foreground]

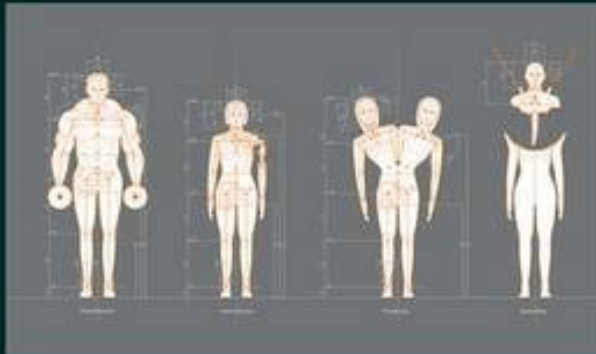
TEACHING AND LEARNING

Integrating mapping pedagogy into the classroom, the lab, and public experiments



Edited by
Jos Boys

Disability, Space, Architecture A Reader



ROUTLEDGE


JOS BOYS



DOING DISABILITY DIFFERENTLY

An alternative handbook on architecture,
dis/ability and designing for everyday life

ROUTLEDGE




5. challenge what is 'normal'



Aaron Williamson "Demonstrating the World"

<https://weareunlimited.org.uk/commission/aaron-williamson-2/>





Liz Crow 2012-13 *Bedding Out*
[http://www.roaring-girl.com/
work/bedding-out/](http://www.roaring-girl.com/work/bedding-out/)







What we're asking the students to do today, is to experience the world from a different plane.





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ARCHITECTURE BEYOND SIGHT



The Bartlett
School of
Architecture



The DIS/ORDINARY
Architecture Project

ARCHITECTURE BEYOND SIGHT 2018

More from Tim Copsey





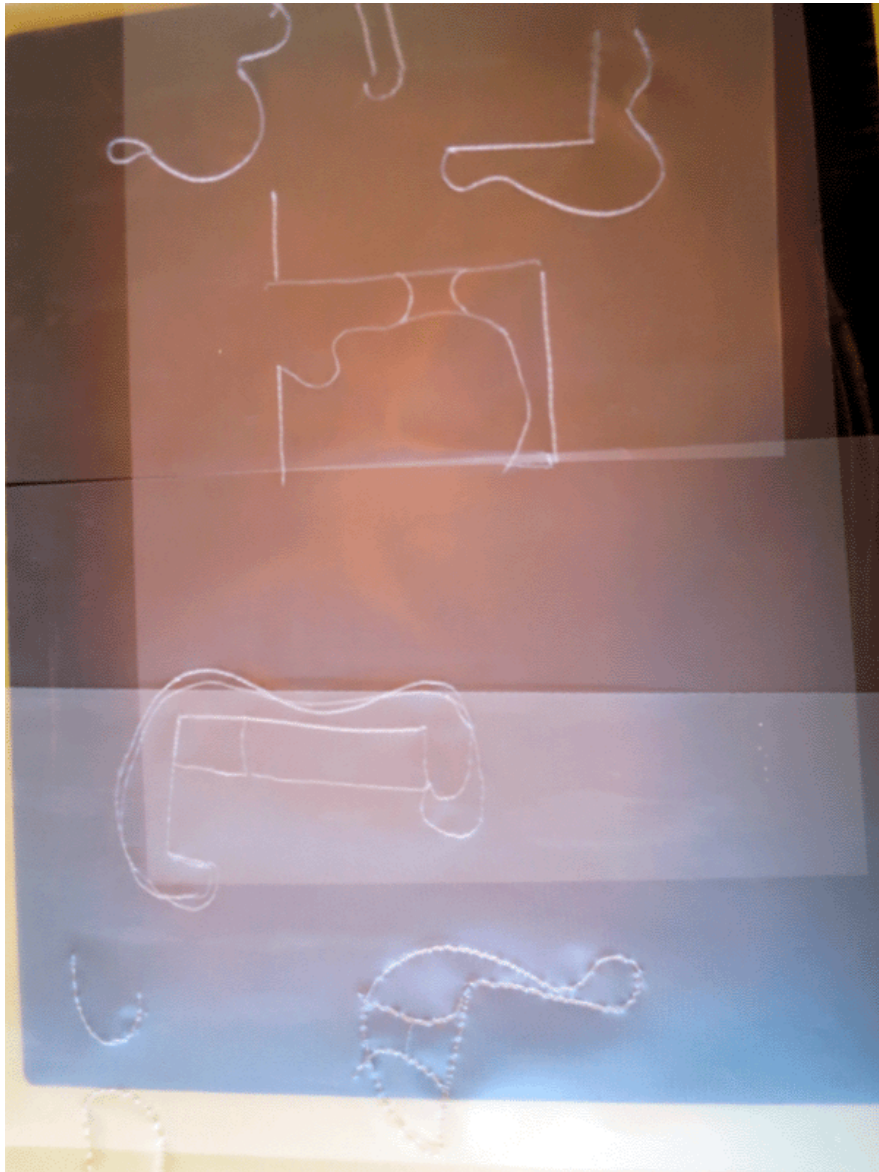
Architecture Beyond Sight workshop, Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL
September 2018













The DisOrdinary Architecture Project

doing disability differently in architecture and urban design

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Our mission: to promote activity that develops and captures models of new practice for the built environment, led by the creativity and experiences of disabled and Deaf artists.



Recent Posts

- [Bloomsbury Festival London 17th-21st October](#)
- [Disability as a design disruptor \(at the V&A\)](#)
- [New BEgoingplaces project begins](#)
- [Architecture Beyond Sight at the Bartlett](#)
- [V&A Disruptive Design event](#)

Selected DisOrdinary Artists

[Liz Crow](#)
[Tony Heaton](#)
[Noemi Lakmaier](#)
[Raquel Meseguer/Uncharted Collective](#)
[Zoe Partington](#)
[Joseph Young/Art of Noises](#)
[Aaron Williamson](#)

THANK YOU

The DIS/ORDINARY Architecture Project

THE DISORDINARY ARCHITECTURE PROJECT

A HANDY GUIDE FOR DOING DISABILITY
DIFFERENTLY IN ARCHITECTURE
AND URBAN DESIGN

JOS BOYS



The Dis/Ordinary Architecture Project starts from the belief that improving the design of built space is not just about "fixing" disabled people to existing environments to better meet their "needs." It is about exposing and challenging underlying attitudes, assumptions and practices that frame disabled people in particular and tested ways, both in everyday life and through the education and practice of architecture and urban design. So, rather than providing yet more inclusive or universal design principles we begin by challenging ableist attitudes and practices. We hope this can open up alternative kinds of inventive interventions towards, not just better inclusive design "solutions," but also better understandings of how the "normal" is constructed in everyday life, and how it can be critically and creatively contested, underpinned by a commitment to social and spatial justice for all.

Most crucially, we have to ask why disability has sometimes remained stuck in a non-historical, ahistorical and seriously underexplored category in relationship to building and urban design practices. It is invisible in both avant-garde and mainstream architectural theories and discourses, just as it has been a persistent absence in critical and cultural theory more generally. Perhaps this invisibility just how deeply

disability remains widely avoided, compared to other disadvantaged identities. It seems that we assume "disability" to be unable to bring any kind of criticality or creativity to the practice of architecture.

The Dis/Ordinary Architecture Project aims to change this through the accumulation of multiple small actions that together can create a substantial culture shift, both across built-environment design practices and in societies more generally. We do this by always starting from disability and difference as a means of revealing architecture and urban design's deepest assumptions about who is valued and noticed, and who (and what) is marginalized and forgotten. In the processes of producing built space, we look forward to a time when stating that disability would just be an ordinary part of designing, an obvious place to start, and where ability (just like whiteness or maleness or straightness) would no longer be the invisible and natural size of the dis/abled/bodied binary but, instead, a central part of the problem. Here we suggest seven steps to enable non-disabled people to better pay attention to their often-unnoticed everyday attitudes, as well as other ways to explore disability and difference as a creative design generator and as a powerful critical tool for investigating what constitutes "normality."



STEP ONE //

Assumed Problem //

Disabled people have a tragic life. We should feel sorry for them, and try to help as much as possible.

Actual Problem //

One of the privileges of ableism is to misrepresent disabled people's diverse lives and experiences. Underpinned by a clear and seeming straightforward division between "us" and "them," it enables able-bodied people to simultaneously assume their own bodies as unproblematic, ordinary and unmarked, whilst framing disabled bodies in simplistic ways as being lacking, abnormal and a problem. In fact, many disabled people will say that their biggest problem is not the fact of having an impairment, but the disabling attitudes and barriers that come from other people only seeing that impairment. This is what disabled people mean when they talk about the "social model." As opposed to the Medical Model of disability, rather than seeing disability as an individual personal tragedy, we need to understand how society itself is disabling (or enabling) by creating barriers for some people and not others.

Doing disability Differently (1) //

"[...] disabled people have to be ingenious to live in societies that are by their

left page: Maria Wladimir's latest exhibition project as part of 'Disability, Space, Architecture' (London: Pavilion, 2016) (bottom: 2016).

left page: In the "The Disabled Assemblage Table" which includes Wladimir and Maria Wladimir respond to, and create artwork based on, some central social practices including: 'Lunch', 'Sleeping', 'Sex' and 'Dress' (Chapman and Tom and art). Through a series of tables the artists reconfigure their various (dis)abled bodies and are by turns men, boys, women and various combinations. Though humorous, their work is a critique and, indeed, a form of protest: not before the disabled people could actually have an artistic voice. For 'The Dis/Ordinary Architecture Project' is a project with creativity that can inform design practices in a much more fully and thoughtfully way than current norms and reductionist approaches. ("Lunch Tables" table art from Wladimir, Wladimir and Maria Wladimir. The Disabled Assemblage Table: 2016).

left page: 'Disability and the City' (London: Pavilion, 2016) (bottom: 2016) with Jos Boys' table on the table. Individuals underrepresented across all the University of Westminster. Students explored their living space in public interests with both positive possibilities and creative social outcomes. ("Neuroscience" Jos Boys' table art from Wladimir, Wladimir and Maria Wladimir. 2016) Photograph by Jos Boys.

design inaccessible and by their inclination prejudiced against disability it requires a great deal of artifice and creativity to figure out how to make it through the day when you are disabled, given the condition of our society." (Brian Stawell, "The Art of Disability," in Disability Studies Quarterly 10(3), Fall, 2010).

Disabled people have in fact little choice but to be experts in negotiating the built environment, with valuable knowledge and experiences that can deeply inform building and urban design. We need to find better ways of taking notice of diverse perspectives and experiences of living built space that open up "normal" architecture and built environment design practices to question. Collaborating with disabled artists, as Dis/Ordinary Architecture does, is one way to do this because it enables an equality of creative dialogue and action. Another is to recognize that there are already many disabled designers, planners, teachers and associated experts working in the field, and aiming to build on this as something vital to design practice. Able-bodied people also need to find ways to challenge their own privileges around, and assumptions about, different levels of bodies-in-space.

- Start from disabled people's creativity, activism, and scholarship.
- Co-design with disabled people as creative experts.
- Check your privilege.

STEP TWO //

Assumed problem //

In building and urban design, we need to do things for disabled people that help them lead a more "normal" life.

Actual problem //

Current built environment practices often reproduce normative built spaces that privilege the able, whilst discriminating against the disabled. This is because we live in a world where individual mobility, autonomy and personal competence are

Edited by
Jos Boys

Disability, Space, Architecture
A Reader



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JOS BOYS



DOING
DISABILITY
DIFFERENTLY

An alternative handbook on architecture,
dis/ability and designing for everyday life

R

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