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/ EXERCISES IN ACCESS INTIMACY

# Co-being in Walking – Exercises in Access Intimacy

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The main topic of the article is walking performances by artists with disabilities (Carmen Papalia and Noëmi Lakmaier). The author pays particular attention to Katarzyna Żeglicka's performance *Weź się przesuń!* (C'mon, Make Over!) presented at the Arsenał Gallery in Poznań in 2022, a walking relay that took place in the space of the exhibition *Politics of (In)Accessibilities: Citizens with Disabilities & Their Allies*. In her reflections, the author refers to the concept of access intimacy developed by Mia Mingus, Carmen Papalia's idea of *open occess* and Sunaura Taylor's and Judith Butler's reflections on the interdependence of walking.

Keywords: walking performance; artists with disabilities; access intimacy; accessibility; interdependence

## Accessible walks

Artistic walks (or more broadly, walking performances) have great potential for inclusivity. The simplicity of the activity and the use of space make them easily adaptable to the needs of persons with disabilities (hereafter 'PWDs'), and artists with disabilities can take part in them without much difficulty.

Walking performances are actions in which the movement of participants and/or performers is the fundamental element of the drama. They take a variety of forms (individual and group walks, aural or multisensory walks, walks with a guide or with a map or script in the form of instructions), use a variety of locations (building interiors and open spaces), and are linked to a specific place, or can be performed anywhere; they activate urban spaces and rural areas. What they have in common is the use of walking as a key structural element.

Walking performances by artists with disabilities more than other ones attract the attention of passers-by who do not realize what they have accidentally stumbled upon. The otherness of bodies with disabilities attracts the eye (cf. Garland-Thomson, 2020). Non-standard actions in public space performed by non-normative bodies become more visible and exposed to viewers. At the same time, they provoke the question of what standard actions are, who introduces norms and who is excluded from them.

In order to understand the specifics of walking performances created by artists with disabilities, the category of hypervisibility of PWDs introduced by Petra Kuppers, may be useful. The researcher notes the double presence and visibility of the artist with a disability: 'invisibility as an active member in the public sphere, and hypervisibility and instant categorisation' (Kuppers, 2017, p. 17). On the one hand, they do not have unrestrained access to public spaces as people without disabilities do. On the other, their action is immediately noticed, and they focus attention on themselves. Kuppers links this to breaking the 'stereotypes of passive disability' (2017, p. 17), which is associated with taking control of one's own image and breaking with the medical and charitable model of perception of PWDs.

Ewelina Godlewska-Byliniak uses Kuppers' category of hypervisibility to

explore activist actions of PWDs. As she writes,

> It can be hypothesised that people with disabilities who undertake direct acts of civil protest or disobedience in the public space become hypervisible in a particular way for their visibility is enhanced by a type of activity that deviates from what society is used to expecting from people who are considered to be dependent, lacking willpower or powerless. Here, however, hypervisibility becomes an ally in the struggle for rights, and the presence regained in subsequent protest actions becomes a political presence (Godlewska-Byliniak, 2020, p. 111).

An analogous situation is produced in the performances of walking artists with disabilities. Their bodies, being a tool and often the subject of moving around, become active and causative, define methods of using public space and establish new rules of presence in it. PWDs' actions not only encourage the search and exploration of space in ways other than the everyday routine (which is typical of walking performances), but also pose an additional challenge for those who participate. They direct attention to the space as well as the performers' bodies, their capabilities and potentialities, the broadening of the category of walking and its inclusivity.

Who and how can be seen in public space, how walking can build the drama of performance – all these themes are addressed in Katarzyna Żeglicka's workshop work *C'mon, Move Over!* (Weź się przesuń!). This was a three-day meeting with a group of female workshop participants held as part of the exhibition *Politics of (In)Accessibilities: Citizens with Disabilities, and Their Allies* at the Arsenal Gallery in Poznań. It ended with a walking performance

open to the public.

In this article I will look at the production of the post-workshop show and the preparations for it. I will reference different types of walking performances that draw on a set of similar strategies. I will utilize my discussion of the tools used in creating walking performances to analyze *C'mon, Move Over!*

## The intimate visibility of walking

Katarzyna Żeglicka calls herself a *crip* and *queer* theatre educator. She is a dancer, activist, arts facilitator as well as a WenDo instructor (self-defence training for women and girls). She created a walking performance even before the event at the Arsenal Gallery. In 2021 she presented *I'm Coming!*[1] (Już lecę!) as part of the *PedestrianMayDay* (Pieszymaj) project. As she wrote in the her announcement, 'For some time I have been fascinated by walking; walking as motion, as a process, as a path; walking as a struggle against balance, time and gravity; its diversity and complexity.'[2] *I'm Coming!* was a slow walk, extended in time, along the runway at the disused airport Kraków Czyżyny. The work was intended to last two hours, but was discontinued after ninety minutes due to difficult weather conditions. Żeglicka did not complete the route. She rested her hands on her knees and, after taking a few deep breaths, walked off the runway before reaching the end. As Katarzyna Waligóra noted in her review,

> In other circumstances, such a surrender by the artist would have meant a failure of performance. This time it is different; the performer's breakdown turns out to be touching, and her hour-and-a-half-long struggle with balance and weather conditions was admirable (Waligóra, 2020).

In this disruption of the transition there is something close to another walking performance, *One Morning in May* by Noëmi Lakmaier. On 28th May 2012 in London, the artist set off, without the wheelchair she uses on a daily basis, on a route from Toynbee Studio to The Gherkin building.[3] Dressed in a graphite suit and a lilac shirt, she crawled through the streets of London.

According to Google Maps, the route she had mapped out had about eight hundred metres, and should take eleven minutes to complete. After seven hours, Lakmaier was roughly halfway through the route, and ended the performance. Exhausted, in torn clothes and with dishevelled hair, she leaned against a building and lit a cigarette.

What Lakmaier's walk and *I'm Coming!* have in common is the withdrawal before the end of the walks, but the audience reactions to the artists' presence were extremely different. *One Morning in May* caught the attention of passers-by. A video recording shows some of them asking Lakmaier if she needs help. Others filmed her with their phones. In an essay accompanying the documentation of the performance, Mary Paterson draws attention to Lakmaier's double visibility in the space:

> Unlike her surroundings, Lakmaier does not appear visually. What you see is not what you get – the crawling woman is both apparent and inexplicable to comprehend. Instead, she represents (amongst other things) visuality, and its processes (2012).

Paterson calls Lakmaier's strategy a disruption of visibility. By this he means that the artist's action in public space attracts the gaze of passers-by, but by not fitting into the accepted norms, it becomes both visible and displaced.

The simplicity of the action and its uncommonness, and its incompatibility with the norms all trigger extreme reactions from the public, from actively not paying attention to the artist's presence and looking away to wanting to help and not understanding her refusal.

In *I'm Coming!* Żeglicka's dual presence was taking place on a different level. Few people came specifically to see the performance, and Żeglicka's walking did not draw the attention of passers-by. Her petite figure escaped the gaze of people walking along the old runway. The movement, slowed down, unnatural and hypnotic, was not visible either. A short woman with a disability moved at an alarmingly slow pace within a popular walking spot. Hardly anyone stopped to check what was going on. Few people even turned their heads. While Lakmaier's performance was dealing with the artist's hypervisibility on the street, *I'm Coming!* achieved the opposite effect, i.e. Żeglicka became invisible to most walkers. However, when someone accidentally fixed their eyes on the artist walking in slow motion, her presence became mesmerizing. The action was not spectacular; in a crowded place it resonated with a small group of people who noticed something doubly absent from the Polish streetscape, i.e. the presence of PWDs and walking.

This invisibility combined with hypervisibility is unusual for walks created by artists with disabilities. Often it is the visibility of the action that is crucial in them. It is masterfully employed by Carmen Papalia, a Vancouver-based artist. Although he is a blind person, he does not want disability to be the basis of his identity, which is why he describes himself as a non-visual artist. In his walking performances, Papalia proposes that those who participate depart from the hegemony of sight and open up to other senses in the reception of art and space. But to outsiders, Papalia's performances are

exceedingly spectacular, hyper-visible and attention-grabbing.

One of his most famous projects was *Blind Field Shuttle*, a walking tour for groups of up to ninety people. The route followed city streets or paths along lakes or forests. Participants lined up, one person behind the other, holding hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Their eyes were shut. At the head of the march walked Papalia with a white cane. *Blind Field Shuttle* took place for the first time in 2010 in Portland. Since then, it has been repeated more than a dozen times in the United States and Europe. As Papalia emphasizes,

> I don't think of this walk as like a walk in my shoes or like a simulation of my experience, because there's like a lot that I can't share with people in that way. I really think of this more as like time in which we're – intentional time spent with your eyes closed, time where you're exercising your non-visual senses (*AGNES Talks*, 2020).

The walking tour enables Papalia to create new conditions for his own functioning in the public space. On the one hand, it changes his position – from a person stereotypically perceived as needing help to a group guide. On the other hand, it forces the participants not only to activate their non-visual senses, but also to be more attentive to each other. As the creator tells us,

> The walk is a completely interdependent organism, and this makes for an encouraging, empowering experience. Perhaps this is why I have never thought of myself as the point for empathy with this work because when I'm leading a walk we're all choosing to

navigate by way of our non-visual senses (Papalia, 2016).

*Blind Field Shuttle* is not an activity that goes unnoticed. A group of several dozen people lined up one after another and led by a man with a white cane is a sight that must attract attention. Thus, Papalia makes the presence of people with disabilities visible. He utilizes their hypervisibility and at the same time, like Lakmaier, the uncommonness of the action.

Papalia's performances are an artistic quest for safe moving around on one's own terms and breaking with the socially imposed position of a victim. The artist draws on his experience and examines what kind of presence on city streets would be attractive and useful to him. He seeks the comfort of his being in a space. This can be seen in spectacular performances in which he moves through the streets with a white four-metre cane (*Long Cane*) or with the support of a marching band which uses Papalia's route as a kind of score signalling to the artist by means of sounds what obstacles he has in his way (*Mobility Device*).

As well as in public spaces, Papalia's actions have just as often been performed in institutions. It is in this context that a long-standing artistic and anti-political project under the banner of *Open Access* was developed. In it, Papalia demands the development of new inclusive practices for PWDs, giving them greater agency and decision-making in accessing the offerings of institutions. In *Open Access*, Papalia criticizes reducing the issues of accessibility to the elimination of architectural barriers. He demands that the thinking of accessibility be extended to include mutual aid and attentiveness to each other.

In *An Accessibility Manifesto for the Arts* Papalia lists the five tenets of *Open*

*Access* (2018). As he points out, these are his own preferences for producing networks of relationships in which he would like to work and create. The demands presented to institutions influenced the remodelling of the approach to accessibility. Firstly, *Open Access* presupposes the presence of the people it is intended to affect, the recognition of their needs and the mutual trust and exchange of support. Secondly, it demands recognition of the heterogeneity of those with specific needs. It does not strive to create a common experience for disparate participants, but assumes that 'everyone carries a body of local knowledge and is an expert in their own right' (Papalia, 2018). *Open Access* is based on embodied learning in which everyone can determine their own position. This, of course, requires the trust of all participants in the process. The fourth tenet refers to interdependence as the basis for a radical reconstruction of power. This requires a reimagination of normalcy as 'a continuum of embodiments, identities, realities and learning styles' (Papalia, 2018). Finally, Papalia defines *Open Access*as a shared, temporary space of free sharing. It is adaptable as the needs of its participants and the resources available change. It creates a 'responsive support network' (Papalia, 2018).

Papalia's actions provoke questions about the openness of institutions, the accessibility of the space and its public status. They point out that public is not always synonymous with social, and that the audience is defined by institutions as a narrow, elite group with the privilege of taking advantage of the institutions' offering. Papalia emphasizes that access requires mutual aid and attentiveness to each other.

> An affective, social rather than purely technological approach to accessibility is called access intimacy by one of the creators of the Disability Justice Collective, Mia Mingus. It is the ease of contact

> emerging in a particular relationship, resulting from an understanding of the other person's accessibility needs. It is about understanding and intimacy in which there is no charity. Accessibility in this sense is therefore not a technological requirement, but a process and a relationship (Król, 2020, p. 62).

Mingus' approach described by Agnieszka Król is close to Papalia's recognitions. The concept of access intimacy discussed by the activist emphasizes the individual nature of the needs of all individuals within a network of relationships, requiring attentiveness to each other. Like Papalia, Mingus departs from the charitable model and focuses on seeing the other person's subjectivity first and foremost and trying to find a common field of access.

> Sometimes access intimacy doesn't even mean that everything is 100% accessible. Sometimes it looks like both of you trying to create access as hard as you can with no avail in an ableist world. Sometimes it is someone just sitting and holding your hand while you both stare back at an inaccessible world (Mingus, 2011).

For Mingus, access intimacy is a tool for the empowerment and liberation of people with disabilities, not just their inclusion in the world of those without disabilities. It creates the conditions for transforming the balance of power, giving space to people who hitherto could only find themselves in the field of hearing exclusively on the terms set by the majority, i.e. people with normative bodies (Mingus, 2017). Access intimacy can refer to a variety of areas and people, and apply to 'mamas and parents, women of colour, queer and trans folks, etc.' (Mingus, 2011). Mingus does not associate it with

knowledge of discourse or knowledge of disability studies, ableism or accessibility. She makes a clear distinction between it and the willingness to help, the coercive implementation of accessibility or the charity model of perception of disability. She defines it as a relation, an attitude of openness and vulnerability towards the other person.

Access intimacy, like Papalia's institutional practices, goes beyond thinking of accessibility as combating architectural barriers and extends it to include issues of relationships with PWDs as well as understanding, humanizing and empowering them. It is a conscious observation of the impact of ableism on reality, and co-being with PWDs in a world subject to ableist rules. It is an attitude of solidarity, of noticing each other's needs and seeking opportunities to support each other in meeting them. At the same time, it is a shift in focus; 'the power of access intimacy is that it reorients our approach from one where disabled people are expected to squeeze into able-bodied people's world, and instead calls upon able-bodied people to inhabit our world' (Mingus, 2017).

## *Politics of (In)Accessibilities*

It is this kind of accessibility, militant, independent and responsive, that can be discussed when describing the exhibition *Politics of (In)Accessibilities: Citizens with Disabilities, and Their Allies* which was on show at the Arsenal Gallery in Poznań from February to April 2022. Katarzyna Żeglicka delivered two performances as part of the exhibition. In addition to her workshop work, culminating in a walking performance in the exhibition space, she showed her own performance *The Resonance of Contrast* (Rezonans kontrastu) in which she addresses the topic of oppression of women (including women with disabilities) in Poland.

In addition to some ephemeral events, such as Żeglicka's performances, the exhibition at the Arsenal features eleven works addressing the issue of disability. For the most part, they are an artistic record of personal experience (Pamela Bożek, Kolektyw Nurkowy Bojka (Bojka Scuba Diving Collective), Daniel Kotowski, Grupa Nowolipie, Paulina Pankiewicz & Grzegorz Powałka, Joanna Pawlik, Rafał Urbacki, Karolina Wiktor and Liliana Zeic). A departure from this rule is a series of photographs by Artur Żmijewski, showing naked men with and without disabilities in a way that is both objectifying and aestheticizing.[4]

*Politics of (In)Accessibilities* was an example of an action that could be a response to the demands of access intimacy. This is already apparent in the way the exhibition is talked about. Zofia nierodzińska,[5] the initiator of the project and at the time deputy director of the Arsenal Gallery, is listed in the exhibition credits as an assistant. This is an important gesture emphasizing her role as the instigator of the process, someone who supports the artists and does not impose her curatorial vision on them.

In a conversation, nierodzińska emphasized that the *Politics of (In)Accessibilities* was co-created by invited artists. Rather than drawing on the solutions of other institutions, the assistant curator opened the conversation to inventing the best possible accessibility options (nierodzińska, 2022a). Together with the artists, she looked for ways in which the artists could be present in the exhibition. The Bojka Scuba Diving Collective organized its own guided tour, Daniel Kotowski chaired a meeting with d/Deaf immigrants from the East living in Poland, and Karolina Wiktor organized a workshop for people with aphasia and their carers. Other events accompanying the exhibition included a workshop by Katarzyna Żeglicka, culminating in a walking performance around the exhibition.

While viewing the exhibition, one can notice at several points its connections with walking. The most obvious is the movement of the visitors. As nierodzińska recalls, it was important for her to develop an audio description of how to move around the exhibition, from entering the building to walking around the exhibition.[6] The decision to develop a detailed description of the route through the exhibition forced the gallery to fine-tune the exhibition layout much earlier than usual. The provision of mp3 files with the audio description enabled visitors to use them on their own terms.

The theme of walking and co-being in the process of moving along was present in Paulina Pankiewicz's installation *Psychogeographical Views* (Widoki psychogeograficzne). It is a record of urban drifts that the artist embarked on together with the blind runner Grzegorz Powałka. Joined by a rope, they walked or ran around the city. The work is a collection of visual and poetic notes from their wanderings.

Walking also appeared, albeit not explicitly, in the curatorial rationale accompanying the exhibition. In it, Zofia nierodzińska refers, inter alia, to Sunaura Taylor's *Beasts of Burden*, Jadwiga Stańczakowa's *The Blind* (Ślepak) and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies*. Already with this choice, the curator points to the direction of thinking about the exhibition, i.e. as a space for co-thinking about disability in social, ecological and political contexts. One of the focal points of nierodzińska's curatorial rationale is the documentary film *Examined Life*, directed by Astra Taylor (2008), an important voice regarding the analysis of art walks by people with disabilities.

Taylor invited eight male and female philosophers to take part in her documentary in which they move through various locations (primarily in New York) reflecting on themes set by her. For nierodzińska, the key

segment of the film is the one featuring Judith Butler, who is the only one who chose to share her time with another person. As Kathryn Abrams rightly points out,

> The other seven philosophers respond to questions from Astra Taylor, the director, who remains mostly off camera. They are, in effect, occupying the entire screen of their segments. Butler chooses to share the frame. She situates herself as the interlocutor, rather than the primary subject. and her segment foregrounds a disability activist-Sunaura Taylor, the sister of the director-whose work might at first seem orthogonal to her own (2012, p. 73).

Butler and Sunaura Taylor, who uses a wheelchair due to arthrogryposis, walk through San Francisco's Mission District discussing the conditions that must be met in order to be able to walk in public space. The camera follows both their movements through the colourful streets and the steps of other passers-by. The conversation begins with Butler asking what walking means to Taylor and what it looks like. Taylor explains, 'I always go for a walk. … I use that word and most of the disabled people who I know use that term also' (Taylor, 2008). The following minutes of the conversation (an extended version of which was transcribed and published in the book of the same title that accompanies the film (cf. Taylor, 2009) concern, on the one hand, the city's relatively highly accessible architecture (San Francisco is referred to in the conversation as one of the most disability-friendly cities), and, on the other, with the normalization of ways of staying and moving in public spaces (Taylor describes the reactions evoked in observers when she uses her mouth to carry a coffee cup to a table in a café; Butler recalls the story of a Maine boy who was murdered because his way of walking was deemed too

feminine). The most important theme of the meeting, however, is the interdependence and apparent sense of independence among people without disabilities. Passing a shoe abandoned on one of the side streets, the interlocutors wonder how the person who left it walked on.

> BUTLER: So what seems clear to me is that we're always conditioned to take a walk. Certain conditions have to be met. We need means of mobilization, we need support, we need surfaces. And it seems to me that having the use of your feet is not a necessary condition for a walk. That's one of the things that becomes most clear when you talk about taking a walk or taking a stroll. Feet can be one means of mobilizing the body, but certainly not the only one, and not even a necessary one. And that means we get to rethink what a walk is in terms of all the things that power our movement, all the conditions that support our mobility.
>
> S. TAYLOR: And I have many friends who don't have feet who go for walks (Butler, Taylor, 2009, p. 188).

The conversation between Butler and Taylor is important in my research on walking performance for several reasons. Firstly, it broadens the context of walking to include diverse bodies and opens up the category of walking to moving with assistive equipment. If going for a walk always (or at least in the vast majority of cases) involves the use of equipment that is not an organic part of the body, any movement can be considered as walking, be it in sports shoes, in stilettos, using a wheelchair, a crutch, or a white cane. A walk is not an activity reserved for those using two legs. It is the shared experience of all movers.

Secondly, Taylor and Butler pay particular attention to interdependence in the world. When it gets cooler during the walk, Taylor requests that they go into a second-hand shop that they are passing by to buy some warmer clothes. Butler helps her take a jumper off the hanger and put it on. Although the shop sells clothes by weight, the shop assistant estimates the price without weighing the jumper so that Taylor does not have to take it off and put it on again. This situation becomes an example of tender responsibility for each other and attentiveness to each other's needs.

> BUTLER: Do we or do we not live in a world in which we assist each other? Do we or do we not help each other with basic needs? And are basic needs there to be kind of decided on as a social issue and not just my personal, individual issue or your personal, individual issue? So there's a challenge to individualism that happens in the moment in which you ask for some assistance with the coffee cup. And hopefully people will take it up and say, 'Yes, I too live in that world in which I understand that we need each other in order to address our basic needs. And I want to organize a social and political world on the basis of that recognition!' (Taylor, 2008).

We live in a world where we need one another's support and help to meet our basic needs. The very recognition that the world is structured in this way makes it possible to reject the concept that people without disabilities are independent and that PWDs need special treatment. We all need help and support. The question is what our needs are and how we can assist each other in satisfying them. Taylor and Butler's joint walk is an embodiment of interdependence on several levels, 'interpersonal interdependence, theoretical interdependence between gender theory and disability theory,

interdependence between resistance and reform' (Abrams, 2012, p. 73).

## *C'mon, Move Over!*

Co-being, interdependence, mutual care and attentiveness to each other's needs were prominent in *Politics of (In)Accessibilities*. These were also important themes in Katarzyna Żeglicka's three-day workshop process entitled *C'mon, Move Over!* The workshop was designed as a movement laboratory for women and people with experience of living as a woman, open to the participation of people with and without disabilities.

The three days of meetings were intended to culminate in a performance open to the public. In the workshop announcement, Żeglicka wrote,

> 'We are not going to be doing the job of the state and institutions in building an accessible and safe environment because that is their responsibility. Instead, we will try to define them in our own way. We will focus on the environment in which we live. With attention to individual needs and in an atmosphere of mutual care, with (im)mobility and voice, we will decide how to transform the inaccessible space. We will expand it, change it and, if necessary, demolish it.[7]

There is a large potential for institutional critique in this description, which appears to bring the performance that concludes the workshop close to Carmen Papalia's practice. Reclaiming one's own place in the public institution and a bodily intervention in the exhibition space was supposed to conclude the series of meetings with a group of female participants.

However, not even one person with a visible disability signed up for the workshop. As Żeglicka mentioned in the interview, there could have been several reasons for this (the time of Covid, the methods of workshop promotion, or the way the information about the workshop was presented). Consequently, Żeglicka changed the starting question. It was worded as follows: 'How can fit bodies make their presence known and speak about those bodies that are not here?' This question, rooted in the practice of co-presence and close to access intimacy, was an important starting point for the work for a group of six.[8]

On the first day, Żeglicka and all six workshop participants worked in the exhibition rooms, performing a series of attentiveness exercises (to become more attentive to each other, their own bodies and the surrounding space). For the next two days, the work moved outside the gallery. The exercises proposed by Żeglicka can be described as a practice of testing hypervisibility in the public space. On the second day, the participants were tasked with finding places around the Arsenal Gallery that resonate with the slogan 'C'mon, Move Over!' One of these was a wheelchair ramp that was located next to a door in such a way that it made it impossible to use the door. Participants engaged in physical actions with this space (e.g. sliding down the stairs or lying down on them), activated it and drew the attention of passers-by to it, and to themselves. Then, during a walk in the vicinity of the gallery, they stood still in their chosen locations (e.g. in the space between traffic lanes), aiming to attract strangers' eyes. In her interview, Żeglicka drew attention to the unfavourable reactions from passers-by and their distrust towards the participants' actions. She mentions that this unprecedented behaviour was commented on ('Must be some nutcases!' (Żeglicka, 2023) and created distance.

Although Żeglicka does not reach for the term hypervisibility, her description of the actions refers precisely to this kind of cripping space:

> A disabled body attracts the gaze by its very appearance in space. Bodies without disabilities that do strange actions in space have mental disabilities, a mental illness attributed to them (2022).

It was not the participants' aim to pretend they had a mental disability; nevertheless, their activity (i.e. not conforming to accepted norms) became a determinant of disability. Żeglicka's observation is a repetition and inversion of Taylor's narrative; a body that does not behave in a typical way becomes defined as sick and disabled. Thus, its otherness becomes hypervisible.

On the last day of work, the participants took to the streets of Poznań again. It was 22nd February 2022, two days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, when social unrest was evident. Żeglicka says that the group felt the need to react to the situation, to translate their fears and anxieties into action. The participants prepared banners with slogans of support ('We are with Ukraine') and walked with them across an intersection or stood still in the street. The reactions were enthusiastic, 'people came up and thanked them, took pictures' (Żeglicka, 2022). Although the actions were similar to those of the first day (standing motionless by the street, occupying a zebra crossing), the use of a banner to highlight the subject of the action changed its perception.

I am not sure if this perception was the same as Żeglicka's observations. The performers did not confront their assumptions with passers-by, and it is not possible to say with full confidence that the hostility they recognized on the first day was real, or only perceived as such due to the emotions and

reactions of the performers. I rely exclusively on Żeglicka's observations, her account and interpretation of the situation. According to her, when she and the performers talked as a group about the two days of work, they all agreed that the reactions of the audience were different on each day. This was related to the themes raised in the conversations, i.e. the (non-)presence of the body with a disability in public space, and the visibility of disability and how it is shaped by society. Starting from the category introduced by Mingus, one can regard the practice proposed by Żeglicka as generating a situation of access intimacy. Guided by the theme, the workshop participants were sensitized to the inaccessible when entering the street. They did not have the ambition (or possibility) to make public space more accessible. The purpose was to make a change at the level of their own mind-set, to reverse their own perspective and notice what might be a barrier for others. The exercises proposed by Żeglicka enabled the participants to test hypervisibility at the level of performance, to see what it is to work in public space and how their bodies without disabilities might be interpreted by passers-by depending on the nature of the actions and their understanding of them.

The third day of the workshop was also a time to work on a twenty-minute performance open to the public. Żeglicka proposed the form of a relay. The actions of the performers were to be broken down into specific points in the exhibition and performed in relation to them. 'I imagined it as a relay between the body and the work; I abandon something, but the work also takes something from me' (Żeglicka, 2022). The successive stations were connected by a joint procession of the performers and the audience. Participants randomly grouped into three pairs worked in contact with three works in the exhibition, the mural *Samoreal*by Karolina Wiktor, Liliana Zeic's installation *Apples Growing on Oaks* (Na dębach rosną jabłka) and *All Is Not*

*Gold* by (Nie wszystko złoto) Pamela Bożek.

## The Relay

The performance *C'mon, Move Over!* took place on Tuesday 22 March 2022, at 4 pm. 'It was a rather intimate gathering for those people who can at all afford to come to the gallery during the day, but quite a few people turned up nonetheless,' reported nierodzińska (2022). I reconstruct the course of the performance based on conversations with nierodzińska and Żeglicka and a small amount of archival material from the Arsenal Gallery (no full video documentation was produced, only a few shots were included in a video clip summarizing the exhibition).

Upon entering the gallery, members of the audience were not given instructions as to where they should take a seat. There was no clear division between the performers and the spectators. The audience, moving slowly through the exhibition, chatting freely and waiting for the performance to begin, after a while could see the first couple in action. Two female performers performed a choreography based on gestures of care and tenderness, hugging and the closeness of partnering. The movement actions were scripted in response to Karolina Wiktor's work *Samoreal*, a mural presenting an alphabet invented by the artist.

> 'Inverted alphabet' or in other words 'inverted fonts' are minimalist incomplete-concept letters. The author, Karolina Wiktor, created her 'inverted alphabet' in a state of aphasia following a stroke she suffered in the year two thousand and nine.[9]

The alphabet was intended to serve as an aid in relearning communication

skills. Probably this is where the choreography came from, with the performers partnering each other and reaching out to the audience with their actions. They invited the audience to hug them, directed the fingers of their hands from their eyes to the eyes of the audience. As Żeglicka recalls, they were entering the viewers' personal space. At the same time, by moving among the audience, they reinforced the group's sense of unity and togetherness in which there are no divisions between the stage and the audience.

After a short sequence, the group moved on to Liliana Zeic's installation, the work of an ally. *Apples Growing on Oaks* was an object lying on the floor, with an elongated, floral shape, resembling a cactus made of straw. Hanging next to it was a white fabric imprinted with the shape printed on it, which was a simplified replication of the object, and some key words placed around it, which 'are directly related to the experience of processing trauma through non-normative sexual practices, or BDSM practices.'[10] Zeic's work was 'a symbol of a queer body processing trauma, a non-normative body being traumatised.'[11] Another couple emerged from behind the fabric hanging from the ceiling and very slowly began to approach each other. The performers held out their hands towards each other in a gesture alluding to *The Creation of Adam* by Michelangelo. nierodzińska recalled how electrifying it was to wait for the performers' fingers to make contact, and their concentration on the action focused the attention of those watching (nierodzińska, 2022a).

The final stage of the relay was Pamela Bożek's work *All Is Not Gold* which consists of a photographic self-portrait of the artist wrapped in gold fabric with her son and a gold-painted plaster cast removed from his leg. The installation is 'a record of how to deal with the experience of a child's

disability in public space' (nierodzińska, 2022b). The performers prepared a short prayer. Starting the action, they recited it with small books modelled on prayer books in their hands. They then switched to singing, to protest shouting, and finally read the text while kneeling in front of the artwork.

> God, c'mon, move over!
> It's time to move to the background
> to let the human being into the foreground.
> A perfect being.
> You, me, one person, a golden umbilical cord.
> You, me, one person, a golden umbilical cord.
> God, c'mon, move over! (Żeglicka, 2022)

They repeated this several times with different intentions and energy. nierodzińska recalls this sequence as the most disturbing. Żeglicka remembers it most accurately. The action was intense, corresponding to the artwork presented. It evoked anxiety and fascination. The text, styled as a prayer, reinforced the image of a mother with her child in her arms, creating a para-religious situation of celebration. As it grew in intensity, the action departed from the calm and tender atmosphere of the previous sequences.

That was the end of the performance. All the performers gathered in the middle of the exhibition hall, Żeglicka thanked them for their time and the workshop together and said goodbye to the audience. She did not participate in the performance; she observed it together with the audience.

The relay nature of *C'mon, Move Over!* took into account the particularity of a walking performance. The performers' movement and the choreography were part of the architecture of the exhibition. nierodzińska hesitates to call

the stops at the individual works stations. She points out that not all viewers walked with the group. Some watched the performers from afar, others approached them closely. Such a structure implies freedom and an independent decision on how the participants of the walk-around relay would walk. The form was close to that of a guided tour of an exhibition, except that the authors' narratives about the individual works were a choreographed movement. They embodied the themes dealt with in the artworks, but also created their own complementary and expanding contexts.

The relay by Żeglicka and the female workshop participants stands out from the other examples of walking performance discussed here. It is carried out by bodies without disabilities moving through an exhibition space that presents works of artists with disabilities. There is something tender about this co-being in this particular situation, in producing it by diverse bodies attracting attention to shared themes. This presence is an affirmation of Butler's and Taylor's thesis; we live in a world where we are interdependent on one another so we need to notice one another's needs.

## Activism

While the actions performed by Żeglicka and the participants around the Arsenal Gallery were a search for inaccessible places, the work at the exhibition and the performance did not address this issue. Despite real changes towards architectural accessibility, Żeglicka recalls that the exhibition space was difficult for her as a person with a disability. The red walls and red floor were not conducive to work. She recalls that she tried and failed to negotiate a room change. However, she admits that despite her fears and initial resistance, the red space blended well with the activities

proposed by her. It is possible that this experience, the incorporation of the space into the performance, weakened the critical potential. It is possible that despite the rather emphatic wording of the text informing about the workshop, it was not incorporated in the movement activities. It is possible that if the workshop had included people with visible disabilities, the course of action and themes would have been different. This does not change the fact that Żeglicka's work, her very presence at the exhibition, the practice of seeking the visibility of people with disabilities and the question of how they are visible, worked well in the *Politics of (In)Accessibilities*. The work was a process that became a component in creating an allied institution and shared space for people with and without disabilities. It was an exercise in access intimacy, the shared looking of diverse bodies and individuals at an ableist world. It was based on relationships; between the participants in the process, with Katarzyna Żeglicka, and with the work of artists with disabilities. Through co-being the participants had the chance to practice attentiveness to each other, to their own and others' needs, and to explore these in a joint presentation at the exhibition. Finally, *C'mon, Move Over!* was an attempt to open both the participants in the process and the people watching it (on the streets of Poznań and in the gallery) to potential interdependence, the necessity of conscious co-being in a world that we cannot change, but in which we can only function by caring for each other.

Katarzyna Żeglicka describes herself as a burnt-out activist. However, looking at her practice against the background of the work of other male and female artists with disabilities, one can see that the aspect of fighting for the rights of people with disabilities is constantly present in her work. Through her (non-)presence, hypervisibility and partial invisibility, Żeglicka questions the rules of shaping public space and repeats demands that can, at least to a tiny extent, contribute to fighting the ableist social order.

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# Footnotes

1. Repeated on 22.07.2003.
2. Description of the performance is available on https://www.kzeglicka.com/taniec [accessed: 1.03.2023].
3. Documentation of video-performance is available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPGoaBMH60s&ab_channel=HydarDewachi [accessed: 28.02.2023].
4. The juxtaposition of Żmijewski's work with that of other artists has caused some controversy in the disability community as mentioned by both nierodzińska and Żeglicka.
5. Surname spelling consistent with the way nierodzińska signs her texts.
6. The audioguide descriptions were created in collaboration with the Culture Without Barriers Foundation and Remigiusz Koziński.
7. Information about the workshop is available on the Arsenal Gallery website: https://arsenal.art.pl/event/wez-sie-przesun-performatywne-przeksztalcanie-niedostepnych-przestrzeni/ [accessed: 1.03.2023].
8. The participants of the workshop and the final show were Misia Żurek, Monika Wińczyk, Natalia Klupp, Agata Tomorowicz, Wiktoria Sobora and Magdalena Przybylska
9. *Karolina Wiktor AD*, Galeria Miejska Arsenał, 9.02.2022, https://youtu.be/Wo94_shP4EU [accessed: 1.03.2023].
10. *Liliana Zeic AD*, Galeria Miejska Arsenał, 9.02.2022, https://youtu.be/Fxh07mZoKkI [accessed: 1.03.2023].
11. *Ibid*.

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