

Manual for Episode 1: *On Access Intimacy*

as part of *Interdependence: On Disability Justice and the (performing) arts*
by Carly Everaert and Mira Thompson

On Disability Justice and the (performing) arts is an open education resource for use by art academies, universities, schools, and any other body of research and study. The series of videos and companion material introduce prompts on accessibility and disability justice in art and culture.

Thinking within disability justice discourse and drawing from personal embodied experiences, Mira and Carly make a start with integrating a canon where disabled artists, bodies and experiences are represented; showing that a disability justice perspective on (performance) practices can change the way we move through the world.



Episode 1: *On Access Intimacy*

Video with sound, 13:19 minutes

English with Dutch subtitles

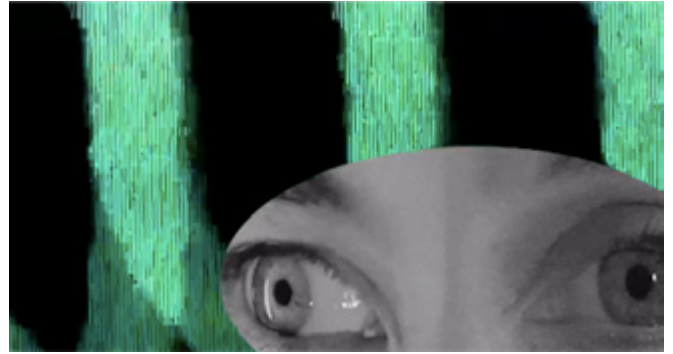
Descriptive transcript (text-based document PDF including audio and image descriptions)

This first video-lesson departs from the concept of “access intimacy” as coined by the American-Korean disability justice thinker and writer Mia Mingus: “... that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else 'gets' your access needs. The kind of eerie comfort that your disabled self feels with someone on a purely access level.”

The video is a teaching tool, designed for teachers or other (self-) educators and learners who are interested in the way bodies are historically (under) represented, and invested in creating more awareness of the social, political and philosophical definitions of disability.

Content and learning objectives

- An introduction to the frameworks of the “social model” of disability and Disability Justice
- Examples of accessibility in the arts through references of artworks, artists, performers writers and activists
- “Access intimacy” as an important principle of equity on which you can move in the field of art, illuminating an impetus for collective care
- How creativity and imagination help to envision different ways to live and thrive in community



Suggestions for use

- The video can be presented in a classroom or workshop setting and used as a teaching tool to have conversations about art, culture and disability (see assignments on the following page).
- The lesson can be customized to your unique setting and the allotted time of your specific unit, varying in introduction, discussion and assignments.
- The video can be presented alongside the included references and other material (see below).
- **It will be very helpful to understand the impact of the video lesson. Please leave your feedback in this form ([link](#)). Thank you for dreaming with us.**

Considerations

All the learners in the classroom come with different bodyminds and lived experiences of disability, illness, and debility, whether themselves or someone they know. It can be helpful to start with how and why it is important to talk about accessibility, disability, and ableism, and how it intersects with other aspects of our realities.

Along with the assignment prompts in the lesson, we encourage you to consider various activities or modes of expression that students can engage in within your classroom. How can the lesson be tailored to the specific context, community, and conditions?

Depending on the focus of your class and since we all have different learning styles, consider how the participants in your group can choose how they share their learned knowledge through a range of media. For example: instead of writing, participants can be asked to draw, record, video, sculpt or express in any other way.

For more vocabulary about these topics, see **Glossary of Disability-Related Terms** ([website link](#)).

Assignments prompts from/with the video

1: "After I play the song, I would like for you to" **STOP** video after the song at minute 1:48

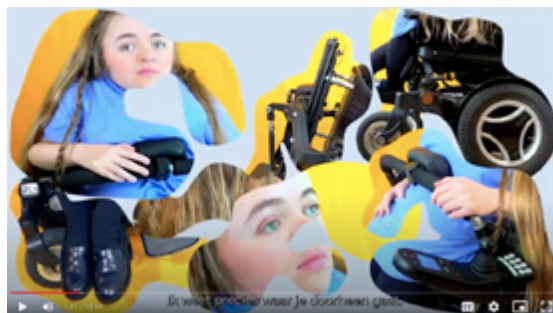
Take 2.5 to max 5 minutes to write down six associations.

Please share the associations.

What do you notice about them?

Take approximately 10 min to share and exchange with each other.

+ What would be less othering/excluding behavior?



2: Considering Mira's story about her friend in the bathroom in France: **STOP** video at minute 5:47

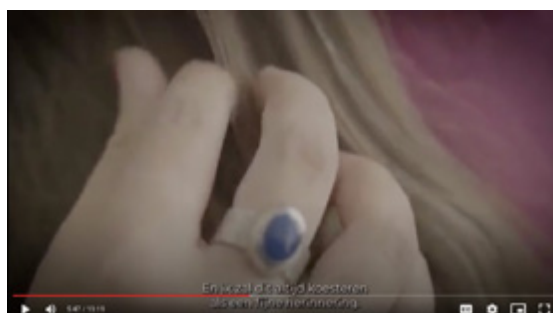
Take 10-15 minutes to write down an experience where you could feel when your access needs were being met:

How did that make your body feel?

Where exactly in your body did you feel relaxed or at ease?

Take approximately 15 minutes to share and discuss.

+ How could you use or translate an experience of access intimacy to a collective creative process?



3: "Now that you have digested all of this information, I want you to go back to the words you've written down in the beginning."

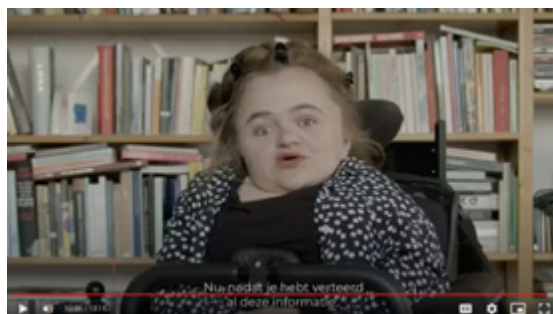
END Begin with a body-scan before the last prompt. Start with the top of your head and slowly scan your body to your feet, and then back up again. Notice how you are feeling.

Take a deep breath, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Do this three times.

Did your associations change? In what way?

+ Can you name your dream world in one sentence?"

Write the outcomes of your dream-worlds on a big paper or board.



Works cited and additional resources

Tiny Shoes by **Mira Thompson**, film and animation by Feline Hjermind ([video link](#))

Mia Mingus, *Leaving Evidence* blog:

Changing the Framework: Disability Justice, 12 February 2011 ([website link](#))

Transformative Justice: A Brief Description, 9 January 2019, ([website link](#))

Access Intimacy: The Missing Link, 5 May 2011 ([website link](#))

Black Lives Matter ([website link](#))

Audre Lorde

"Your silence will not protect you" comes from the essay "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," initially delivered at the Modern Language Association's "Lesbian and Literature Panel," Chicago, Illinois, December 28, 1977. First published in *Sinister Wisdom* 6 (1978) and *The Cancer Journals* (Spinsters, Ink, San Francisco, 1980) ([pdf link](#))

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare" wrote Lorde in her 1988 book *A Burst of Light* (Firebrand Books, 1988), which was written soon after she was diagnosed with cancer for a second time.

Park McArthur

How to get a wheelchair over sand, 2013, chromogenic print, 21.6 × 27.9 cm

Ramps, 12 January - 23 February 2014, Essex Street ([website link](#))

See also Park McArthur and Constantna Zavitsanos, "Other Forms of Conviviality," *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, Volume 23, Issue 1 (2013), 30 Oct 2013 ([website link](#))

Activating captions, 2021, Argos centre for audiovisual arts (Brussels, BE) co-curated by Christine Sun Kim and Niels Van Tomme ([website link](#))

Sins Invalid ([website link](#))

See also **10 Principles of Disability Justice** ([website link](#))

Patty Berne and Stacey Milbern, *My Body Doesn't Oppress Me, Society Does*, 2017.

This video is part of the series *No Body is Disposable*, produced by Sins Invalid and the Barnard Center for Research on Women. Video by Dean Spade and Hope Dector. ([video link](#))

Staci Bu Shea and Mira Thompson, *A New Culture of Accessibility*, Metropolis M, 2021 ([website link English](#) or [website link Dutch](#))

Frida Kahlo

Circe Henestrosa, *Frida Kahlo's Construction of Identity: Disability, Ethnicity, and Dress*, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 18 March 2020 ([website link](#))

Bed zine ([Instagram link](#))

The chosen **artists wearing facemasks** in the video all work from embodied experiences that recognize and artistically articulate different forms of oppression:

Louise Bourgeois

“When I first saw the sculptures of Louise Bourgeois in the mid-nineties, I felt not only addressed but summoned, pulled by my hair into a dialogue both intimate and difficult. On the one hand, her commanding bodily, elemental forms registered immediately in my own body and somewhere distant in my cultural memory. But her work also threw me into confusion. Everything was not fine. If that admission was a relief, it also felt like a hazard because her art offered no comforting affirmations.”

– Madhu H. Kaza, *The Subject of Pain: On Louise Bourgeois*, The Yale Review ([website link](#))

Kara Walker

“Christina Sharp's powerful meditation on intimacy, subjection, and subjectivity culminates in an analysis of Kara Walker's black silhouettes, and the critiques leveled against both the silhouettes and the artist.”

– On Christina Sharp's *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects*, Duke University Press ([website link](#))

“In provocative and obscene but aesthetically pleasing works on paper, executed with extraordinary technical finesse, she depicts racism, gender, sexuality and violence.

Fearless in her analyses, she investigates the emergence of collective self-images and also her own identity.”

– Kara Walker, *A Black Hole Is Everything a Star Longs to Be*, De Pont Museum ([website link](#))

Sabrina E Grieg, *Race Abstracted: Kara Walker's Interrogation of pain, parody, and pleasure*, Sixty Inches From Center ([website link](#))

Maria Lassnig

“If you could make visible the experience of having – or inhabiting – a body, what would that look like? This is the question Maria Lassnig (1919–2014) spent her career answering. The term she used for her project of visually recording physical sensations was ‘body awareness.’ ... other themes like the role of women in society, death, family, political conflicts or even the communication between humans and animals also crowded her canvases.”

– Waarom Maria Lassnig de confrontatie niet schuwt ([website link](#))

Marlene Dumas

Widely regarded as one of the most influential painters working today, Marlene Dumas has continuously explored the complex range of human emotions, often probing questions of gender, race, sexuality, and economic inequality. Through her focus on the human figure, Dumas merges socio-political themes with personal experience and art-historical antecedents to create a unique perspective on the most salient and controversial issues facing contemporary society. Her work consistently explores constructions of identity and the fluid distinctions between the public and the private.

– *Marlene Dumas: Against the Wall* | David Zwirner Books ([website link](#))

Marlene Dumas (continued)

For more than 30 years, the Amsterdam-based South African artist Marlene Dumas has pursued the same project: painting humanity. Drawn from media imagery, her own photographs or her imagination, her subjects are frequently unclothed and vulnerable, captured at moments when they are hungry for affection, consumed by sexual desire or violence, or marked by social or racial injustice – all the while remaining utterly engaging. In her works, Dumas makes deliberate use of violence and pornography to draw attention to the human condition in all its diversity.

– Noemi Smolik, *Marlene Dumas Paints Vulnerable Yet Strong Women Through History* ([website link](#))

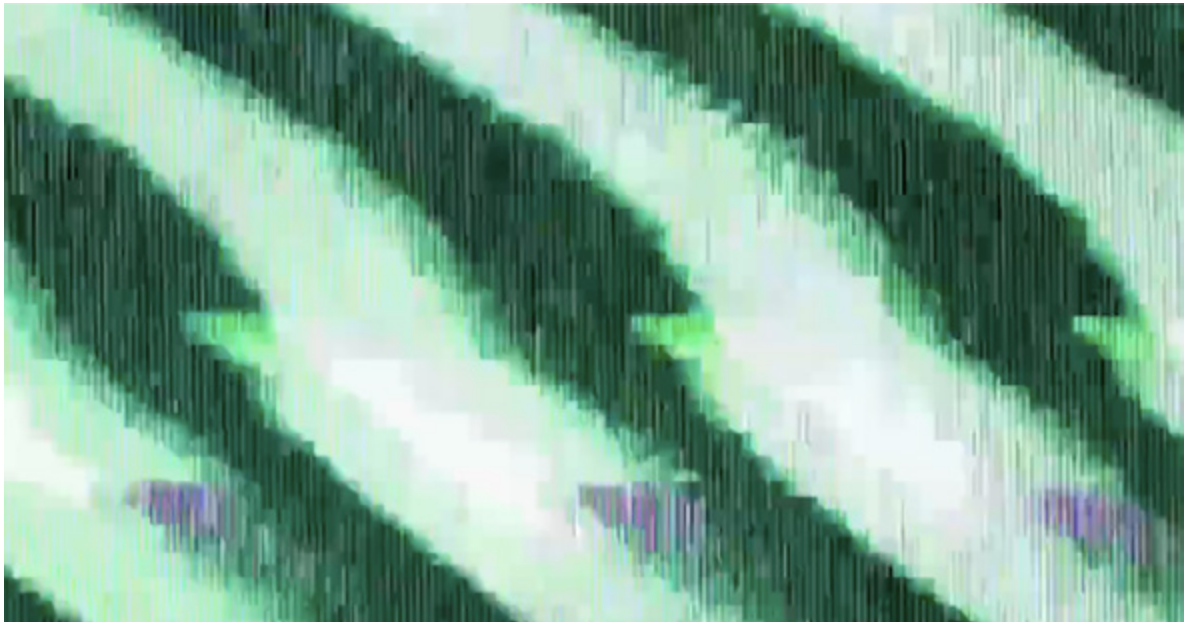
Yinka Shonibare

Born in London, raised in Nigeria, and self-described as a “postcolonial hybrid,” Yinka Shonibare creates art that wittily comments on the contradictions of the Enlightenment and Victorian eras while also speaking to contemporary political, environmental, and social issues.

– Yinka Shonibare - Sculpture ([website link](#))

Paula Rego

Paula Rego: why the Portuguese artist's work remains relevant in the fight for abortion rights ([website link](#))



Biographies

Mira Thompson (she/her, Amsterdam, 1993) is a singer, songwriter and performer. Informed by the tradition of vocal jazz, she is drawn to narrative song and strong poetic and visual elements within music. During her time at HKU Utrecht Conservatory, she developed a fascination for the different ways in which the voice can function as an embodied instrument. Whether written, spoken or sung, Mira wields language to evoke deep and buried feelings with an earnest yet witty approach. Within her own artistic practice or that of others, cross-disciplinary collaboration is at the heart of Mira's work. She writes on subjects of disability, language and activism to contemplate a more accessible world.

Carly Everaert (they/them, Steenbergen, 1960) is a costume designer and a teacher-researcher in the scenography department of the Academy of Theater and Dance in Amsterdam (ATD). They are a member of the Embodied Knowledge research group at ATD where she researches questions of costume, space and embodiment from an intersectional, practice-oriented perspective. In their ATD fellowship (2022-23) research called *Creating spaces for other(ed) bodies*, they started to develop a critical collaboration with Mira Thompson.

Colophon

Concept: Carly Everaert and Mira Thompson

Video artist *Tiny Shoes*: Feline Hjermind

Artwork: Veere van Gent

Caring hands: Bea Goethart

Lijntjes artwork: Sidsel Mehlsen

Video: Mats Logen and Karlijn Milder

Descriptive transcript and manual support: Staci Bu Shea

Coordination: Joy Brandsma

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