

What if.... Neurodiversity? Symposium

Symposium general description:

A big part of the neurodiversity movement today is aimed at shifting the prevailing discourse and culture away from the “pathology paradigm” and toward the “neurodiversity paradigm” (Walker 2021). In some contexts, this shift expresses itself in two interlinked gestures: the first is the continuous critique and research of the pathology paradigm, which operates on the assumption that significant divergences from dominant sociocultural norms of embodiment and performance represent some sort of deficit or pathology. This gesture involves researching where the pathology paradigm originated, why it has become so dominant, how it operates, and how it is deeply intertwined with other modes of oppression, such as whiteness, ableism, speciesism, heteronormativity, class, etc. The second is the recognition of the tremendously rich diversity in human expression, embodiment, and thinking.

Many artists and thinkers have embarked on an explorative journey of creation with neurodiversity to make this shift. They are engaging with neurodiversity in ways that unleash previously untapped potential for creating different futures with new values, modes of relation, forms of knowledge, ways of communication, and perceptions. They ask what neurodiversity is capable of when it is always thought of and enacted in relation. These practices toward new (neurodiverse) futures should not be understood as what will be in the future—echoing Tina Campt's (2017) discussion of black feminist futurity—but as performances that engage doing the future now, "as a striving for the future you want to see, right now, in the present."

“What if ... Neurodiversity” is a symposium that brings together artists and thinkers who have developed practices that experiment with the potential of neurodiverse movement, poetics, and perception, along with their many intersections, to create new (neurodiverse) futures now. One of the ways they consistently do so is by foregrounding the ecologies of the human and the more-than-human and their co-constitutive relations.

References:

Campt, Tina M. 2017. *Listening to Images*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Walker, Nick. 2021. *Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilities*. Fort Worth, Autonomous Press.