

CRITICAL CARE

COLBY CHAMBERLAIN ON THE ART OF PARK McARTHUR

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marta_Russell



Opposite page, Above: View of
"Park McArthur: Ramps," 2014,
Essex Street, New York.

THEORY ON TUESDAYS, guests on Thursdays. So goes the weekly rhythm of the Whitney Independent Study Program: seminars led by the program's legendary founding director, Ron Clark, followed by sessions with visiting artists, curators, and scholars. The year I attended, during the 2011–12 academic term, a break in this pattern occurred in February, when it was announced that a fellow member of my cohort, Park McArthur, would lead a seminar on Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory."¹ The week before, McArthur had emailed the group an entry on disability from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, as if anticipating that a roomful of people well versed in Marxism and psychoanalysis might not know the rudimentary distinction between "impairment" (i.e., physical, sensory, or cognitive limitation) and "disability" (the experience of structural or environmental barriers), the two halves of the so-called social model that has informed advocacy and activism since the 1970s.

Carried & Held 2013

Flatbed UV print on Museum Board

Courtesy the artist and Margaret Herman, Alexandra McArthur
John McArthur, Walker Herman, Mary Herman, Gayle McArthur
Rob Wilutz, Mary Doster Whitaker, Bill and Judy Whitaker
Clarence McArthur, Ann Gayle Rankin, Nancy Herman
Tom Herman, Emily Herman, Cherry Simon, Clem Herman
Johanna Herman, Cesar Maldonado, Ernest Herman Jr
Amy Matrys, Peter Freehafer, Verde Barfinger, Rosie Molinary
Betsy Kelleher, Dr. Shen, Emily Mangone, Sally Otvos, Jerry Otvos
Christine Byun, Gal Nyska, Catherine Walker, Jeremy Freifeld
Jane Dalton, Duna Norton, Meredith Steele, Jarine Hoffmann
Jesse Sharp-Williams, Amanda Mattes, Laurie Dunn, Laura Case
Crawford Crenshaw, L.C., Bob Giduz, Mona, Loretta Shaia
Nancy McMillan, Melissa Berry, Bob Lees, Bonnie Wright
Kathleen Cour, Laura Gerhardt, Stanley in China, Angie Wright
Jim McArthur, Ming an Lee, Murphy, Jeffie Chang, Lauren Lopez
Henry Weil, Middleton Chang, Pete, Unknown Taiwanese Businessman
Melissa Bandy, Derek Lundberg, Wendy McArthur, Leigh
Bradford McArthur, Chip Schantz, Brent McCormick, David Prince
Ben Fain, Cybele Lyle, Darren Price, Madelyn Moyer, Owen Fitzpatrick
Becca Fitzpatrick, Audrey Hynes, Tom McArthur, Kathleen Hudspeth
Carrie Saxton, Adler Guenier, David Saxton, Willy Hoffmann
Tara Thananetaporn, Li Lu, Laura Schulenberg, Becky Nolan, Jen Pike
Michael Just, Jessica Sanders, Kevin Tedamrongwanich, Bethany Pelle
Hannah Heckner, Nicole Mader, Nicole Mader's boyfriend, Ceophas Stubbs
Ann Rath, Fred Rath, W Mae Singerman, all the young men who
felt obligated but unsure in volunteering, Loretta Fahrenheit, her dad
Bill Rath, David Rath, Inka Meibner, Tyler Bonnen, Tori Cole, Rebecca Wood
Maxwell Graham, Tom Ackers, Trista Mallory, Michelle Levin, Jason Loeb
Teresa Smith, Tina Zavitsanos, Amalie Dublin, s.o. o'brien, Sky Hall
Yve Laris Cohen, Kristina Bramwell, Krista Heiner, David Crane, Joe Maduro
Nate Harrison, Allan Chang, Kiwan Bigelow, Benedicte Herschien
Lisa Fulenwider, Daisy Figueroa, Bronwyn Charlton, Brooks Girsch
Jessica Rodriguez, Sarah Cantrell, Rachel Heckner, Jeremiah Beaverty
and the Director of the A&I Fomey Center, Betsy Kelleher, Laura Waldman
Henry Van Wagenberg, Stephanie Culhane, Barnett Cohen
Anna Lineback, Bille Lynn, Crystal Campbell, Dana Schrenk
Carey McArthur, Jeannine Tang, the guy from Chinese class at
Chihung's apartment in Miami, Diana Valbuena, Emily Case
Eryn, Greta in Cooperstown, Hadley Smith, Oscar Tillman, Padraig
O'Donoghue, Karl Jiang, Kendal Patterson, Lucy Marci, Mitch Blessing
Kurt from Hudson Mobility, Bradford's friend from Norway, Akemi Nishida
Kristy Hayden, All the airline staff, attendants, and occasional captain
Ben Tiven, Peter Daniel, Tim Saltarelli, Amber Hawk Swanson
Pam and Gary Shinn, Kim McArthur, Sandy McArthur, Naomi Satran-Hon
Cindy McArthur, Cassie McArthur, Terry and Dan, Whitney's parents
Alice Garland and Rodney Swink, the midwife, Mary Lou of the
sandwich shop, Denise Natch, Apex Middle School Janitor, Noelle Nemcik
Ash Fentto, Peter Freehafer, Lisa Freehafer, Cherry Grove Fire Island boat
captain, Ashley Griffith, Chris Aque, Lindsay Caplan, Sonya Dyer
Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen, 2 people living across the apartment at UM
Cyrus Atkins, David Johnson, Nigel Wallace, Boots and Bill, Miss Jean
Er Rooney, Karalatt Anunandichai, Logan Beitman, Keith at in touch
nycpt, Jessica Kain, Adam Voltrath, Pat Nemcik, Mr. Srively, Morica Cook
Milly Holy, Sarah Anderson, Domingo Castillo, Maria Ropicarova, Christina
Evans, Oliver Cano, Cammis Bauerhaus, Aaron @ cage, Susie Fraser

The occupation of Zuccotti Park, which lasted from September 17 to November 15, dominated my time at the ISP. Two cohort members, Amin Husain and Nitasha Dhillon, launched the journal *Tidal*, one of the earliest resources for theorizing the protests' unfamiliar posture. In contradistinction to the antiglobalization movement of the '90s or the antiwar demonstrations of the 2000s, Occupy Wall Street specified no demands, opting instead to denounce generalized conditions of inequality and precarity by fashioning nonhierarchical coalitions and gathering bodies in the street.² Against this noisy backdrop of marches and mic checks, I vividly remember the scene of McArthur leading a discussion on disability studies in a room that had previously hosted the likes of Yvonne Rainer, Andrea Fraser, and Fred Wilson.

Art that takes disability as *subject matter* runs through the twentieth century. In *Disability Aesthetics* (2010), for instance, Tobin Siebers surveys the works on display in the infamous "Degenerate Art" exhibition of 1937, subverting the Third Reich's derisive intent by instead celebrating modernism's exploration of corporeal difference.³ Frida Kahlo's portrait of herself in a wheelchair appears on the cover of Garland-Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies* (1996).⁴ A more recent phenomenon, present in the work of McArthur, Carolyn Lazard, Jesse Darling, and Christine Sun Kim, among others, is art that takes disability as *praxis*—as modes of thought, embodied knowledges, affective alliances. No artistic practice is ever reducible to academic theory, but the parallels between McArthur's work and disability studies that I will draw here begin to convey what she has brought about in the years since that seminar at the ISP: a change in the disposition to what we call the avant-garde.

THE AVANT-GARDE and disability studies share a common objective: dispelling the myth of autonomy. Whether through the shock tactics of Dada or the more sophisticated "neo-avant-garde" strategies of institutional critique, the avant-garde has challenged the presumption that individuals are self-sufficient, artworks self-contained, and museums set off from the rest of society. Likewise, disability studies contends that autonomy is always illusory, the result of norms and conventions that support certain bodies while sidelining others. The two fields diverge in how they arrive at these insights and, perhaps more importantly, in where they go next.

Consider, for instance, McArthur's handling of art institutions in "Ramps," a solo exhibition at New York's Essex Street in January 2014. Across the floor lay twenty wheelchair ramps McArthur herself had previously used to enter galleries and residencies, many of which had been bought, built, or hastily improvised specifically for her. The inspiration for borrowing and displaying these ramps together came in part from John Knight's *Identity Capital*, 1998, for which the artist secured loans of floral arrangements from Balthazar, Bowery Bar, and other scene-defining harbingers of downtown's gentrification. Jeannine Tang has argued that Knight's gambit flagged these restaurants as the art world's favored destinations for power lunches and opening dinners—a critique of exclusivity predicated on an insider's Rolodex.⁵ "Ramps" also hinged on McArthur's credentials. The loans quite literally materialized her curriculum vitae, a course that passed through the ISP, the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and multiple galleries. Simultaneously, those same ramps documented, with near-typological rigor, how the mechanics of exclusion and inclusion begin at an institution's threshold.

Along the wall, black vinyl lettering spelled out the URL for the Wikipedia page that McArthur herself had started for disability activist Marta Russell. In her book *Beyond Ramps*, published the same year Knight staged *Identity Capital*, Russell delivered her own prescient assess-

SCORE FOR BACKING UP

Think about your first lift with your partner.

Know that your partner has done this one million times more than you and that in twelve point font, a list of names of people that have done these lifts with her is 38 inches long when printed and leaves a 14 inch block of space for all the names that will come after you.

Realize you don't remember the occasion of your first time, despite never having done this before.

Realize that she probably does remember.

Consider this discrepancy

Know that now feels like the first time precisely because the first time felt like you've done this forever.

Pull the manual chair down the ramp backwards.

Opposite page: **Park McArthur** *Carried and Held*, Date and material is always specific to the context of the exhibition, in illustrated example: 2013, Flatbed UV print on museum board, 40 x 8 inches. Installation view, The Kitchen, New York.

Above: **Park McArthur and Constantina Zavitsanos** *Scores for Before (Scores for Two or More)*, 2013, Text, vinyl, Dimensions variable

ment of '90s neoliberalism. "The plight of disabled people," she wrote, "like canaries released into the coal mines to detect whether there was enough oxygen in the air to survive, is a barometer for the 'progress' or lack of it in our over-capitalized civilization."⁶ The weakening of the social safety net and the financialization of health care were immediately apparent to those consistently denied employment or shuffled through systems that referred to them as "beds." Russell was particularly trenchant in her account of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which, she argued, George H. W. Bush signed into law to trim welfare rolls. "What good is the freedom to sit in a United Artists theater," she asked, "if one cannot afford the price of a ticket?"⁷

Russell's virtual presence appended a caustic footnote to the Essex Street presentation, ensuring that the ramps could not be construed as evidence of the ADA's success. During the exhibition's run, lending institutions posted notices regarding their ramps' relocation, honoring a request from McArthur that effectively asked them to follow an already existing (but laxly enforced) New York State regulation requiring buildings without wheelchair access to provide information on nearby accessible amenities. None ever asked to take their ramps back—a strong indicator that

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McArthur's class background and white privilege had been as integral to her entry as any incline.

"Ramps" thus established several dimensions of McArthur's approach to institutional critique: It compromised the neutrality of the white cube by introducing a diversity of inhabiting bodies; it activated laws while also signaling their limitations; it could be encountered through multiple physical and online sites; its analysis of access was intersectional. Or at least that's a start. There was also the poignancy of memorializing Russell, who passed away only a month before the show opened, and the emotional undercurrent of the ramps themselves. Each aluminum gangway and makeshift plywood plank gave form to a social relation, to something negotiated between people.

CARRIED & HELD, 2012–, appropriates the format of a museum label to publish a running list of every person who has lifted McArthur in the course of her daily movements. The work is reprinted each time it is exhibited, both to provide an updated tally and to match the design preferences of the presenting institutions, even as it pressures their conventions. Now numbering in the hundreds, the names—ranging from family members to individuals recorded as "airline staff" or "all the young men who felt obligated but unsure in volunteering"—exceed the square inches typically allotted for fine-print specifications of materials, dimensions, or donors. *Carried & Held* performs what Eva Feder Kittay calls acknowledged dependence, an aspect of receiving (as well as giving) care that can be difficult to accept in a society that celebrates its opposite.⁸

In the 2014 essay "Sort of Like a Hug," McArthur drew on Jasbir K. Puar's notion of "conviviality" to characterize her participation in a care collective made up of friends who attended to her needs on a rotating basis.⁹ For Puar, conviviality describes an "event" wherein bodies lose their fixed attributes and join together in vulnerable, potentially uncomfortable assemblages.¹⁰ McArthur grafted Puar's terminology onto the avant-garde's existing lexicon when she and her frequent collaborator Constantina Zavitsanos composed several "event scores" based on Fluxus's signature strategy for focusing attention on everyday actions.

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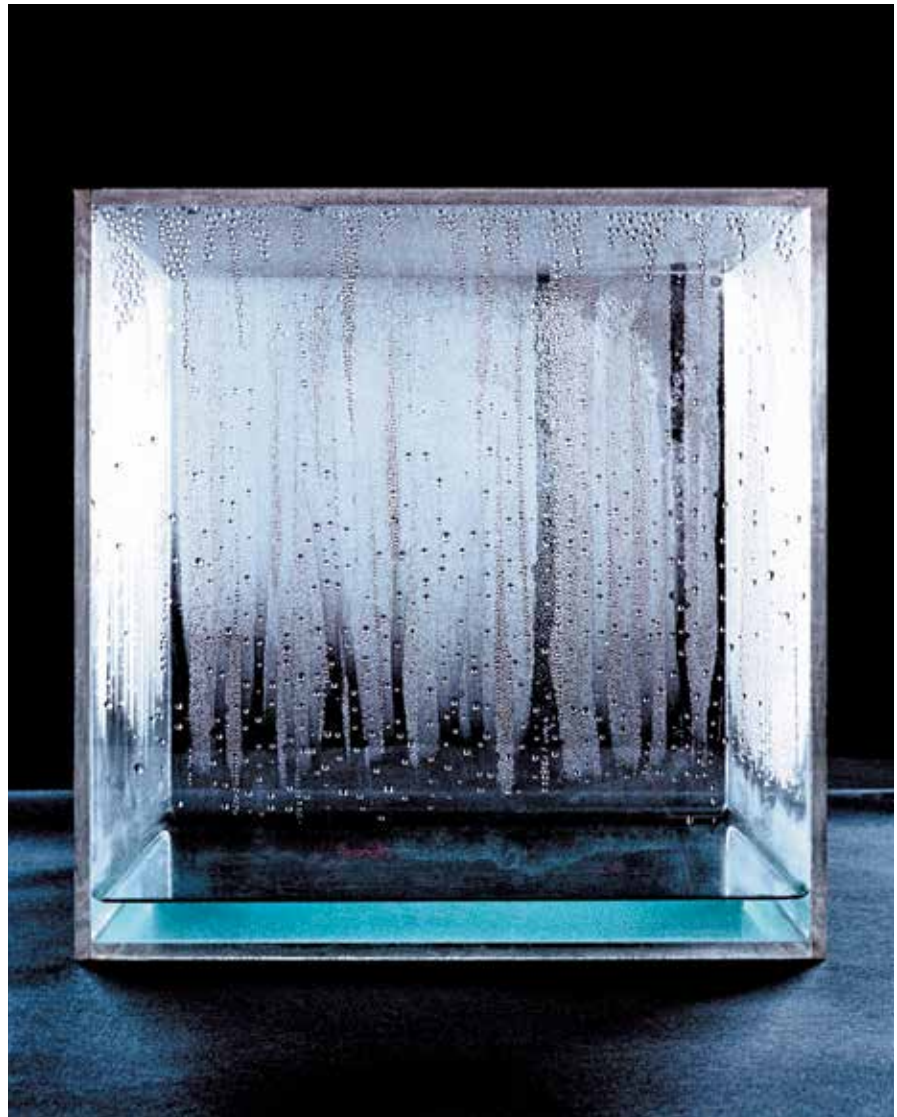
Pull the manual chair down the ramp backwards.

This is a far cry from the gnostic phrasings of the event score's originator, George Brecht. Empathy, memory, and mutual consideration flood Fluxus's isolation of ready-made moments. At a program hosted by Arika in Glasgow, McArthur and Zavitsanos set aside time for the audience to enact such scores themselves, experiencing with one another the choreography and conviviality of care.

In 2017, McArthur and Zavitsanos cowrote "The Guild of the Brave Poor Things" for the anthology *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*. At times, the essay betrays flashes of their individual writing styles—McArthur's a calibrated deployment of extended metaphors, Zavitsanos's a Derridean slam poetry of forceful tenderness—but for the most part the text's invocations of *I* or *we* are slippery and capacious. The polyphony is further intensified by mimicry and quotation, including a snippet from Diana Ross's 1976 single "Love Hangover": "If there's a cure for this, I don't want it."¹¹ *Care's* etymological cousin, *cure* is one of the topics where ableist biases are most pronounced. Isn't it "natural" to want to walk, hear, or see, to live without flare-ups or pain? Alison Kafer and Eli Clare have both challenged this presumption, showing how fixations on future cures devalue present lives.¹² (A similar logic informs Mierle Laderman Ukeles's contention that art has historically privileged innovative breakthroughs over ongoing maintenance.) By repurposing Ross's refusal of a cure for her "love hangover," McArthur and Zavitsanos gestured toward the intimacy and affection that can arise from acknowledging dependency. What good is a cure if it means buying into the norm that we are all on our own?

Cure and *care* both derive from the Latin *curare*, which is also the root of *curator*—a reference to the job's original mandate of preserving objects that now extends ambiguously to its contemporary portfolio of managing relationships. McArthur assumed the role of curator herself in 2016, when she organized, in collaboration with Jennifer Burris Staton, "Beverly Buchanan—Ruins and Rituals" at the Brooklyn Museum. The exhibition culminated a yearslong process that began with McArthur coming across photographs of Buchanan's concrete and plaster sculptures from the '70s and learning they had been largely forgotten, due both to the art world's long-standing neglect of Black women and to the location of the artist's Earthworks in the Deep South. McArthur reached out to Buchanan and, with Staton, undertook the sustained labor of facilitating her recovery, which involved not just the Brooklyn exhibition but the publication of a separate catalogue, *Beverly Buchanan, 1978–1981*, and the shepherding of her papers into the Archives of American Art. McArthur has stated that she considers her "care" for Buchanan's legacy to be separate from her artistic practice, but at times the two appear to converge. In "Ruins," McArthur authored (with Staton and Jason Hirata) a three-channel video installation that offered remote views of Buchanan's Earthworks, and there are passages throughout the *Beverly Buchanan* catalogue essay that suggest a double aspect. When McArthur and Staton write about "the extradition of the phenomenological—experience in or of the world, which ultimately shapes what the world becomes—away from mythologies of objectivism and towards social constructions of gender, race, and class," they are referring to Buchanan's sculptures but might as well be speaking of McArthur's.¹³

IN CRIP THEORY (2006), Robert McRuer expresses hope for "a world beyond ramps and gay marriage"—which is not to say a world *without* ramps or gay marriage, but one that looks past a civil rights agenda geared toward greater participation in a public sphere custom made for



Above: **Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube*, 1963–65**, clear acrylic, distilled water, climate in area of display, 12 × 12 × 12". © Hans Haacke/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Opposite page: View of "**Park McArthur: Poly**," 2016, Chisenhale Gallery, London.

straight white able-bodied men.¹⁴ Positioned at the meeting point of queer theory and disability studies, crip theory aims to unsettle the "compulsory able-bodiedness" of liberalism's "universal" subject. Yet while queer theory's troubling of gender binaries has been faulted by disability studies for reducing the body to discourse, crip theory can be insistently concrete.¹⁵ Sometimes the best deconstruction is a sledgehammer to the curb.¹⁶

Hal Foster has traced the avant-garde's critique of the subject back to Minimalism. By foregrounding the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Minimalism materialized the viewer that modernism had previously addressed as pure disembodied vision. Phenomenology, however, situated its account of perception outside of historical time—leaving open



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the possibility that this new figure was yet another white able-bodied male claiming the space of universality.¹⁷ How then might one “crip” the subject of Minimalism? In their 2019 anthology *The Matter of Disability*, David T. Mitchell, Susan Antebi, and Sharon L. Snyder explicitly cite Merleau-Ponty as a point of departure for considering how disability undoes the illusion of a stable, coherent self by immersing the body in the material flux of its environment.¹⁸

Upon entering “Poly,” McArthur’s 2016 exhibition at Chisenhale Gallery, visitors immediately sensed a change: The notoriously chilly East London space had been raised to a comfortable temperature by portable heaters. Several paper sheets, some fastened to the wall and others placed on the floor, were laced with a polymer powder that reacted to moisture by

becoming a viscous gel. Three black polyurethane blocks, each approximately eight feet tall, occupied a corner. These were prototypical Minimalist monoliths, yet they lacked the physical integrity of steel or varnished wood. Engineered to absorb sound and pressure from behind sheetrock or beneath upholstery, the exposed foam puckered and peeled. “Poly”—short for *polymer*, *polyurethane*, and maybe also Chisenhale’s then-director, Polly Staple, a prefix meaning “many” that amorously couples with a multitude of concepts—created an atmosphere where the warmth, sweat, breath, and bulk of visitors’ bodies passed through and along the porous boundaries of leaky, inconstant objects.¹⁹ McArthur’s activation of the air recalled Hans Haacke’s iconic *Condensation Cube*, 1963–65, even as it structured a markedly different relation between subject and object. Sealing its water within Plexiglas,



Above, left to right: **Park McArthur, *Contact T*, 2016**, Tubing, swabs and stainless steel, Height variable, tray: $\frac{3}{4} \times 16 \frac{3}{4} \times 12"$, **Park McArthur, *Contact F*, 2016**, Barrier creams, foam dressing, heel protectors and stainless steel, Height variable, tray: $\frac{3}{4} \times 16 \frac{3}{4} \times 12"$, **Park McArthur, *Contact A*, 2015**, Prophylactics, catheters, HIV test kit, latex gloves and stainless steel, Height variable, tray: $\frac{3}{4} \times 16 \frac{3}{4} \times 12"$, **Park McArthur, *Contact B*, 2015**, Prophylactics, antibacterial wipes, masks, cannulas, dental dams and stainless steel, Height variable, tray: $\frac{3}{4} \times 16 \frac{3}{4} \times 12"$, **Park McArthur, *Contact S*, 2016**, Disposable mouthpieces, masks, cannulas and stainless steel, Height variable, tray: $\frac{3}{4} \times 16 \frac{3}{4} \times 12$ inches, **Park McArthur, *Contact H*, 2016**, Barrier creams, foam dressing, gel heel protectors and stainless steel, Height variable, tray: $\frac{3}{4} \times 16 \frac{3}{4} \times 12$ inches. Installation views, Chisenhale Gallery, London.

Opposite page, top left: **Park McArthur, *Welcome to PS1*, 2015**, digital C-print, $9 \frac{1}{2} \times 12"$. Installation view, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York.

Opposite page, top right: **Park McArthur, *STUDIO/HOME*, 2018**, Stainless steel, Twenty parts, each: $17 \frac{1}{2} \times 17 \frac{1}{2} \times 3 \frac{1}{2}"$, First Configuration. Installation view, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Opposite page, bottom left: **Park McArthur, *STUDIO/HOME*, 2018**, Stainless steel, Twenty parts, each: $17 \frac{1}{2} \times 17 \frac{1}{2} \times 3 \frac{1}{2}"$, Second Configuration. Installation view, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Opposite page, bottom right: **Park McArthur, *PARA-SITES*, 2018**, Mp3 file and written transcript.

Haacke's cube posited an equally impermeable observer who perceived but never perspired.

The chemical and physical properties of the blocks and paper sheets reappeared in "Contact," 2015–16, a series of metal trays on white plinths holding items such as dental dams, catheters, condoms, surgical masks, heel pads, baby oil, barrier cream, latex gloves, cannulas, and tissues. These contents made "Contact" susceptible to "representationalism," Darby English's term for interpretations that arrest polysemous associations in order to reassert a fixed identity.²⁰ Here, for instance, the trays' various medical supplies could be read as metonyms for their disabled author. Yet the processes these products support—cushioning impact or alleviating friction, moistening or drying surfaces, preventing the exchange of fluids or hastening their flow—all conjured the blurring of boundaries and a convivial confusion between persons, be they lovers or patients, caregivers or kin. Identity is particularly unstable in the context of disability, since, as Kittay observes, the realities of accidents, diagnoses, and old age ensure that everyone is only ever "temporarily-abled."²¹ In *The Right to Maim* (2017), Puar goes even further, insisting that modern nation states *debilitate* their populations, wearing them down through environmental racism,

sanctioned violence, financial precarity, and the relentless withdrawal of the conditions necessary for living a good life.²²

AT MOMA PS1, a row of photographs in the lobby chronicle the building's passage from shuttered public school to satellite of the Museum of Modern Art. During the 2015 iteration of "Greater New York," McArthur supplemented this sequence with a shot of a condominium recently erected kitty-corner to the museum's courtyard. A lamppost banner, sponsored by a local economic partnership, proclaimed MAKE IT HERE / LONG ISLAND CITY / MAKE IT YOURS. The image captured the rapid capitalization of the surrounding area and highlighted a familiar conundrum: Neoliberalism is nothing if not *welcoming*. It denounces discrimination, celebrates diversity, and furnishes accommodation, even as it fashions a society of rank inequality.²³ "I live in the East Village where the sidewalks and curb cuts improve as new elevator buildings, billed as luxury apartments, are built," McArthur observed in a 2014 interview. "This is a neighborhood where a lot of teardowns and rebuilds occur; where the improvement of sidewalks, curb cuts, bus stops, and bus lines is in inverse proportion to economic accessibility."²⁴



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McArthur's study of luxury development's impact on New York continued in 2018 with her contribution to MoMA's "Projects" series, which focused on two buildings: first, 53W53, the residential tower being constructed in tandem with MoMA's expansion of its galleries, and second, a mixed-use facility designed for a combination of independent living and mutual care that was a product of McArthur's imagination. (In the twenty-first century, a high-rise with a pet concierge and dedicated chauffeur lounge is apparently more feasible than below-market apartments that afford their inhabitants a measure of dignity and community.) Documents obtained from 53W53's sales gallery itemized its extensive amenities and

listed several available multimillion-dollar apartments. A set of modular stainless-steel units, arranged in three different configurations during the exhibition's run, modeled the mixed-use facility. Both spaces could also be encountered through *PARA-SITES*, 2018, an audioguide piece McArthur composed in collaboration with Paula Stuttman, a verbal-description consultant to the museum's access program.

PARA-SITES turned a tool of access into an artistic medium, arguably in a manner of greater consequence than "Ramps." In 1936, Walter Benjamin saw in the technological reproducibility of film and photography a potential to implode the myths of genius and eternal value then being

The work of art in the age of its technological *accessibility* provides a full aesthetic experience whether or not one is able to attend an exhibition in person.

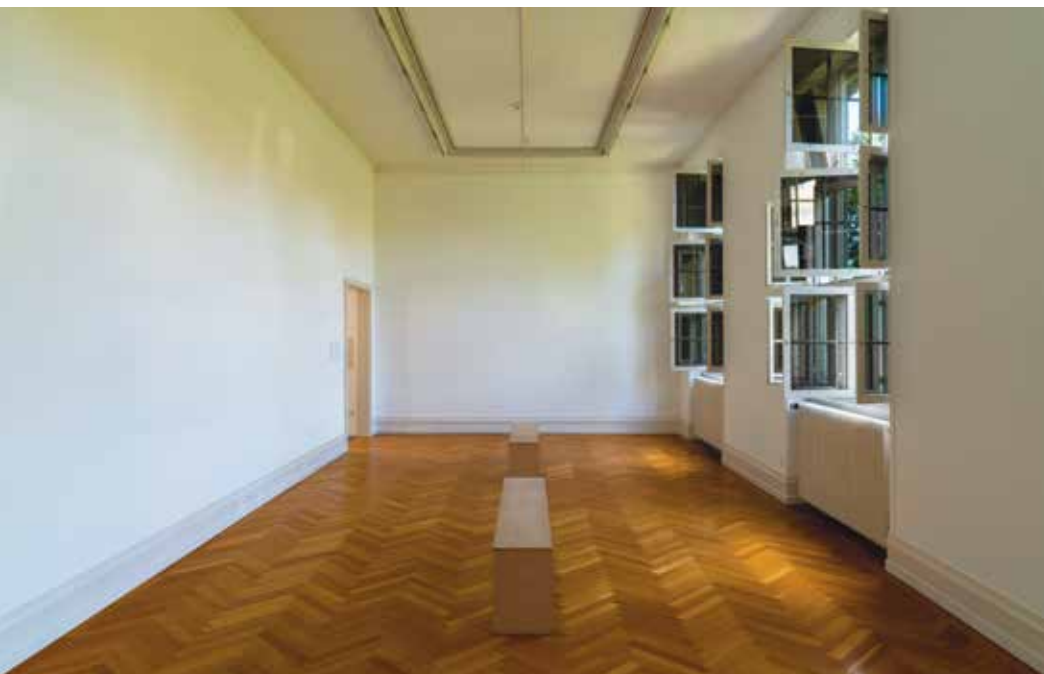




Opposite page: Park McArthur, *Form found figuring it out, show, 2020*, two pages, installed according to options. Installation view, Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland.

Above: Park McArthur, *Fantasies, 2020*, 12 used ventilator filters, 27 5/8 x 2 1/2 x 2 1/2".

Below: View of "Park McArthur: *Kunsthalle_guests Gaeste.Netz. 5456,*" 2020, Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland.



abused by fascism. Now the work of art in the age of its technological *accessibility* provides a full aesthetic experience whether or not one is able to attend an exhibition in person, challenging the rationale for pricey expansions that put museums at the mercy of plutocrats. If a camera could equip the proletariat for collective self-representation, an artwork responsive to sensory impairment might grant today's diversified coalitions the grounds for recognizing one another's profoundly different perspectives.

McArthur further explores the expressive capacities of verbal description in "*Kunsthalle_guests Gaeste.Netz.5456,*" which opened at the Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland this past August (and remains on view through October 4). The exhibition borrows its title from the name and password of a wireless router, whose signal, at McArthur's request, has been expanded to reach the entirety of the institution's physical plant. An audio script, read in both German and English by a longtime employee who introduces herself as "UVM," guides listeners through each room, situating their bodies in space with all the clarity and precision of Merleau-Ponty's finest prose. Verbal description's methodical doling out of salient details is interrupted at unpredictable intervals by anecdotes and asides that McArthur gleaned from research and from the recollections of individuals with long-standing connections to the Kunsthalle. In the courtyard, UVM recites a dizzyingly comprehensive rundown of nearby public transportation; the rigor of listing every stop along each bus and tram line gradually gives way to the lulling rhythm of one Swiss street after another. Any "guests" listening to the recording at Kunsthalle Bern itself will notice that windows have been opened, exposing the interior to changes in light and weather. However, the exhibition is also "hosted" on the Kunsthalle's website, making it available to those unable to attend due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and health concerns. As critic Emily Watlington recently observed, disability communities were thinking creatively about remote access long before every school, business, family, and book club scrambled to transfer online. Now would be a good time to get out of the coal mine if there were anywhere to go.

On view throughout the Kunsthalle is *Form found figuring it out, show, 2020*, a diptych print that appropriates and reverses the markings on incentive spirometers, diagnostic tools that measure air volume. "I use them for inspiration (exhalation follows)," McArthur writes. The edition can be duplicated and variously installed to suit its setting; like a pair of lungs, it expands and contracts according to need. Two additional iterations were shown this past summer in a nearly concurrent exhibition at Essex Street, along with *Fantasies, 2020*, a sculpture made up of disposable air filters from the ventilator machine McArthur relies on while sleeping—and, by extension, dreaming as well. *Form found figuring it out, show* and *Fantasies* encapsulate the change in the avant-garde from 1920 to 2020. Dada rejected autonomy through shock, fracture, and liquidation; its poster child was the young amputee veteran, a hapless victim of militarized nationalism who might have survived trench bombardments and chemical warfare only to succumb to a virulent strain of influenza back home. The current avant-garde, such as it is, rightfully refuses to coalesce around any single identity, and its competing calls for abolition, access, decolonization, or care reflect the breadth and nuance of its viewpoints, even as its bottom-line goal is basic to the point of being primal. Whether it be Covid-19, environmental crises, Black Lives Matter, or the recent protests against the Whitney's ties to tear-gas manufacturers, the political cause of our time is the capacity to breathe. □

COLBY CHAMBERLAIN TEACHES ART HISTORY AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AND THE COOPER UNION.
(SEE CONTRIBUTORS.)

For notes, see page 233.