



The Art of Disability Culture: Artists with Disabilities Dispelling Myths, Dissolving Barriers and Disrupting Prejudice

Ruth's Table Gallery
February 24 - May 20, 2022

Gallery Hours
Tue-Fri 10am-5pm
or select Sat by appointment

PRESS RELEASE



Artwork: *After Ingres*, Katherine Sherwood, 2014.

Ruth's Table is pleased to present *The Art of Disability Culture*, a group show of paintings, mixed media works, digital prints, relief text prints, drawings, ceramics, photography, and sculpture by 12 artists with disabilities who are all part of the local disability community.

At the heart of this exhibition is a celebration of the diverse, personal, and infinitely varied "disability experience". Each of the 12 artists featured has one or more disabilities, whether visible or invisible, and the exhibition centers upon their creativity, vulnerability, and unique perspectives. Disability culture can strengthen our communities through the practices of interdependence, accessibility, and inclusion. The exhibition includes work from artists who worked to create greater access through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as well as work by the younger generation who claim their place in the world as a civil right without apology, whereas the older generation knows that these rights are still vulnerable and at risk, as many have found through the pandemic.

We are delighted to host a reworked version of the exhibition after its time at the Palo Alto Art Center in the fall of 2021. Work in the exhibition is varied and diverse, revealing a wide range of perspectives that are compelling, honest, and vulnerable. The archive black and white photographs by Anthony Tusler remind us of the pivotal Section 504 protest in San Francisco in 1977, that features in the oscar-nominated film Netflix film *Crip Camp*. His contemporary color photographs are an ongoing record and document of the rich diversity and strength of the local disability arts scene.



Artwork: *Sign 504*, Anthony Tusler, 1977. Photograph.

Courtesy of the Walter Maciel Gallery in LA, we are delighted to feature *After Ingres*, one of Katherine Sherwood's Venuses of the Yelling Clinic which explores the disabled gaze, while also subverting the privileges and power of art history. Katherine Sherwood had to relearn how to make art after a stroke at the age of 44 and began to explore the way that the disabled female body is considered. She uses a famous Ingres painting as the springboard for this work and includes scans of her post-stroke brain and a prosthetic arm to further provoke us to question what is

beautiful and what is authentic.

Another focus of the exhibition is several intimate and tender acrylic paintings by Bill Bruckner, including a powerful self-portrait and several portraits of disabled friends that hold our gaze and encourage us to look closer and deeper. Emerging artist Rachel Ungerer is showing two works on repurposed denim and a power drawing *Disabled Strong* that echoes the raised fist of many protesters and activists. Her work highlights and validates the experiences of people with invisible disabilities like chronic pain or epilepsy. From a similarly young digital artist Michaela Oteri, we include her self-portrait *The Future is Accessible* and her memorial portrait of beloved disability justice activist Stacey Milbern who sadly passed away in 2020 but spread her “disability joy” as part of her practice.



Artwork: *Self-portrait*, Michaela Oteri, 2020; *Memorial Portrait of Stacey Milbern* Park, Michaela Oteri, 2020.

We are happy to work with Creative Growth in Oakland, Creativity Explored in San Francisco, and NIAD in Richmond to display work by several of their artists and highlight their programs as models of inclusive art practice that originated here in the Bay Area and are followed far and wide. These organizations work with adult artists with disabilities and provide studio space, exhibition opportunities and income from sales for their artists. Creativity Explored artworks include three compelling and colorful drawings by Camille Holvoet who is known for her joyful images of ferris wheels and cakes. Here, she provides us with a meditation on the range of medications that are a part of her experience. Cedric Johnson from

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Creative Growth is showing two abstract ceramic masks or faces, with highly decorative glazes and patterns. NIAD works include whimsical text prints by Shana Harper, fragile hanging sculptures by Jeremy Burleson, and colorful abstract ceramic birds by Maria Radilla.

Together these works take us to a deep place of engagement, curiosity, and connection, and we hope that they will provide a satisfying, thought-provoking, and powerful experience of our collective humanity and interdependence.

The Future is Inclusive and Accessible

QR codes on the wall labels will take you to audio descriptions of the artwork. A comprehensive Braille guide with labels and audio description texts is available for Deaf/Blind and visually impaired visitors. Exhibition materials are also available in large print. All related events have American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, live captioning, and online components.

Artists:

Bill Bruckner, Jeremy Burleson, Shana Harper, Camille Holvoet, Antoine Hunter, Cedric Johnson, Kaocrew 'Yah' Kakabutra, Michaela Oteri, Maria Radilla, Katherine Sherwood, Anthony Tusler, Rachel Ungerer.

Acknowledgements

The Art of Disability Culture is a continuation of one hosted by the Palo Alto Art Center in Fall 2021 and aims to keep the conversation going. Grateful thanks to all the artists, private lenders, Walter Maciel Gallery in Los Angeles, Creative Growth, NIAD Art Center, and Creativity Explored, Bethany Center Foundation, and Covia/FrontPorch Foundation for making this exhibition possible.

Ruth's Table | 3160 21st Street, SF CA 94110 | www.ruthstable.org
Inquiries: +1 415-621-1000 | contact@ruthstable.org

Facebook, Instagram: @ruthstablef