

Welcome everybody and welcome to this wonderful panel.

Before we start I'll just introduce myself.

My name is Kate Marsh. I am a self-identifying crip artist and researcher.

I work in a number of different roles, but mainly around research and working with other crip artists in producing and realizing their own artistic inquiry.

I'm really happy to be with these three wonderful artists that I've had the pleasure of spending the beginning of this week with and we will be discussing around the topic of disrupting the museum. And I'm really pleased that all of them will speak specifically about their own practice.

But before we carry on I'll briefly describe and then hand over to these three to introduce themselves.

I am a white middle-aged woman.

I have long brown hair with a fringe I'm

I'm wearing a gold bracelet on my right arm

and my left arm is shorter than my right and I have one hand.

I would like to invite our guests here today to introduce themselves including a couple of words about their practice what they do.

We'll talk about their practice in more detail in a moment.

Chisato, are you happy to start?

- Okay. - Thank you.

Hello. My name is Chisato.

That's how I spell it. It's a long name.

My sign name is this, I point and touch the tip of my nose twice with my index finger.

I am a female artist.

I'm a performing artist. I'm also a BSL art presenter and tour guide.

I am an East Asian woman.

I've got short dark hair.

And that's me.

Hello, everyone.

I'm Dalibor.

I'm a tall, white male

and I'm happy to be here with this wonderful artists

and also with the audience.

Hello everyone. I'm Chiara.

I come from Italy

and I'm a choreographer, performer and activist with disability

and a curator too.

I'm very small.

I move in the world with the wheelchair.

I have... not long hair...

brown... I'm white. I'm a cis woman.

Thank you, all of you.

To be predictable, I'm gonna go in the same order

and I would like to invite and ask the three of you,

because we are here specifically in this building,

in this beautiful room to talk about your practice in relation to...

Taking place in museum and gallery spaces.

So just to create a picture for me and for the audience,

it would be really great if you could just briefly describe how your practice happens

in museum spaces,

and you can give the specific examples or speak generally about your work.

Chisato if it's okay, I'll go to you first.

There are a lots of museums and galleries in the whole of Britain.

There's an organisation called Art and Legacy.

And we thought, why not encourage people to start going to the smaller museums and galleries around the country?

So they started in the north and moved down to the south.

This year we are focusing in the Southwest.

And I'm involved in this part. So I've been creating...

with a gallery called Ure Museum.

And it's amazing. It's an amazing space.  
They have incredibly old Egyptian and ancient Greek mesopotamian collections there.  
And it is really a tiny museum and some of the items back from the Mesopotamian time.  
They were telling me that, "in those times they didn't have candles." They didn't have candle lights, so when the sun went down, it was just very, very dark  
So what did people do for entertainment?  
Well, they used to lie down and look at the stars.  
And they had stars and constellations above them.  
And from this, they'd create stories of myths and the gods based on the constellations.  
And as they were telling me this, I was thinking back to these times and there was an Egyptian god called Bennu, which is like a phoenix, and from ancient Greek times...  
Do you know Medusa maybe, a famous mythical creature, a Gorgan.  
I heard the story of how Medusa became a Gorgan.  
And these stories were really strong and they impacted me and it inspired me to create my performance.  
So I created a visual vernacular performance, which is called VV for short.  
VV is actually a performance art that's been created by the deaf community.  
And there's lots of different visual elements that go into it.  
Mime, poetry, sign language.  
I filmed myself doing this performance, and what I did is project this film performance on the ceiling, so the audience would come into this space and lie on the floor.  
And it would be kind of harking back to the old days when people would make stories out of what they could see as the stars in the sky.

So they would be on the floor with a cushion to relax their head on and looking up and watching this story.

And we had music as a sound ambience.

I included Woojer belts, which are vibrating belts that go around your waist and vibrate linking to music that's made or relating to the sounds that are going on.

And so for the taste sense...

We had wine, because back in those days they did have wine.

So we were kind of replicating these storytelling moments and bringing all the senses in.

So the audience would lie down, experience all of this and watch my performance arts.

So that's a piece I created from a deaf perspective in that space, and it's bringing those cultures together and that's what I made for that space.

It's continuing, actually. It's still on if you're interested.

It's in Reading.

And it's the Ure Museum, U R E Museum.

And yeah, that's the way of me creating my art there.

Thank you for listening. Thank you for your patience.

Dalibor, can you speak a little bit about how your work takes place in museum spaces?

And feel free to give examples about specific work or speak generally.

Yes.

First, I will say that I'm from Per. Art organisation.

We are in partnership with the so-called Gallery of Matica Srpska.

I try to think what kind of stories we can tell about this...

about this exhibitions

and we were working on that.

And also that translates into one scene where we walk dressed as ghosts,

with a white sheet and everything.

And paintings are also...

We're covered with white sheets and...

as ghosts talk,

they tell stories about sculptures

objects, or paintings,

like we are those sculptures, paintings or objects.

And that kind of relates to something that is very important,

that kind of relates because, these paintings, objects and sculptures  
are hidden in front of you.

Also it relates to us, disabled persons,

because we are hidden in front of the society we live in.

Thanks Dalibor, thank you very much.

Chiara, tell us a little bit about how your practice...

I keep reminding the question just so to keep it present

- How your practice happens... - That's good.

In gallery and museum spaces.

They work both in galleries and museums

and in theaters.

And I think this is an important consideration,

because an object placed in a space,

like a gallery is...

the meaning can change if you place it then in a theater.

I want to say that I started working in theaters

and then moved on to work with galleries and museums.

The basis of my performance is... I asked myself, I wonder...

about the distance between different people

between people and how we can subvert this distance

and how we can work with that

When I was a girl and then as I grew up as a woman,

I always was perceived as someone who was untouchable,

but because the genetic disorder I have renders me rather fragile,

I have a bone fragility.

And I was talking with Chisato earlier this afternoon,  
and we were talking about the fact that this distance can become  
central to the work and can become a method to work with.

When I work inside the gallery,  
there is an opportunity to really disrupt and revolutionize this distance.  
Because the distance,

the physical distance within a gallery is effectively different.

And not only the spacial distance,

but we need to talk about the light distance,

the distance created by sound that the theater imposes.

I'd also like to speak about the vicinity and the distance with the audience.

And when a performer makes a performance or performs,  
often, that includes the people who are present.

And that's something that I will discuss further on.

So the performance itself includes the audience.

Another reason for which I work in museum and galleries  
is that the space I work in and the space I place myself  
in relationship with

is a space that often hosts, works made by other human beings.

So, in the performance, there is always this relationship between myself  
and the public being there.

And also the other works, which are made by other humans.

And so we go back to the idea of the human body as an artwork.

And I think this is very exciting for me.

Really Interesting. Thank you.

What's really interesting me about something that all three of you are saying  
is...

Chiara, you've kind of answered my question before I got to it, which is great.

- I'm sorry! - No, it's good. It's good.

Thank you.

The question of why gallery spaces

and thank you for articulating that your work crosses gallery spaces and more traditional spaces.

I guess what's really interesting is that whether it's because of the opportunity

that working in museums gives you to think about the body as an artwork or your connection with audiences in a different way or Dalibor, for you, whether it's how the objects in the museum feed into how you make work.

Or Chisato, I'm hearing from you about being inspired thematically by what you're seeing.

I feel like you've all spoken a little bit about what working in galleries and museums give for you.

And I think if you could speak...

and I'll go to this side to give Chiara a break.

If you could speak a little bit more about why it's important for you that your work is there.

Dalibor, maybe if we start with you,

because I'm so interested that Per. Arts have had a long relationship with one museum.

Is that right?

Yes. Yes.

And so I wonder why it feels important for you as a maker, as an author of the work, and as a performer that your work happens in those spaces.

Well, for me it is important that, for example, my performance...

that I'm co-author of, called "We Are Not Monsters", happens in gallery spaces.

Because, this performance is kind of adapted to gallery spaces.

Because my idea was to represent disabled persons as a monsters, but without being one.

And that kind of relates to the photos.

Not a photo story, the pictures in the gallery.

Would I be right in thinking, from what you're describing,  
that by being in the gallery, that almost becomes a conversation  
between the theatrical work and the artwork that actually...

Yes, yes.

Having the performance in the space is bringing a new dimension  
to the physical work,

but the physical work in the gallery is bringing a dimension  
into the performance work

that's what I'm hearing from your description.

Yes and it also brings a new experience for the audience.

Perfect. Thank you Dalibor.

So Chisato,

I know just because I know you and I know your practice,  
that you have a background of working in traditional spaces  
and in museums and gallery spaces.

You've talked a little bit about the space in Reading,  
but why does it feel important to you that your work happens in museum spaces  
and maybe why that is different from more theatrical spaces?

That's a good question.

Before when we were having a conversation,  
there was an important word for me that came up.

Obviously theater and museums...

what they have in common is art,

but that word of "art" to me, that you need a dialogue.

You are having an experience, a dialogue with the art.

So you are either watching a performance on stage or you're looking at something  
in a museum.

So I sort of thought to myself,

it's the same as having a conversation with a person.

Is it back and forth going on there? It requires two sides.

Me being a deaf person,

it's not a physical disability, it's a sensory disability.

Obviously humans have five senses,  
but actually, you know...  
we have five senses.  
I'm really, really fascinated in the senses  
because, again, that's linked to that dialogue that you have  
because you use all of them,  
when you're having these internal dialogues with art.  
If you go to the theater,  
There's an ambience in the room,  
and it's something you can feel. It's tangible.  
You can touch things, you can smell them.  
And if you go into a gallery or museum,  
of course,  
we have an ambience here.  
For example, at the National Gallery...  
It's amazing, isn't it?  
If you look around it makes you stand up straight.  
There's an atmosphere, which is really beguiling in this space.  
So for me,  
in the Ure museum...  
They had that sort of traditional atmosphere there.  
So I thought, how interesting...  
to have that feeling of like an empty theater...  
in a museum.  
And I thought, well, let's bring my work into that.  
And it's the same in a theater. If I'm creating my performance  
I feel like it's the same atmosphere.  
So,  
If I'm looking at the paintings or the collections or...  
they have really valuable and amazing personal, private stories  
behind the things there,  
but it's amazing how people will just look at things in a gallery

and not know the stories behind them.

I'm also a BSL art tour guide and presenter myself.

So when I'm preparing for my tours, I do a lot of research into the unknown behind works of art that I'm showing.

And I love to share that with the audience that come to see my presentations

So I try and keep that

sort of method and I've kept that with me.

So in the Ure museum...

It felt like a different kind of dialogue.

And then I thought, "okay, how would we use all these senses here?"

And I just find that really interesting.

The use of both spaces.

For the next provocation,

just coming back into your practice and museum spaces.

So as this is a panel on disrupting the museum,

my next question is how does your practice, how do your bodies,

how do your lived experiences,

your presence in these spaces...

How are they disrupting if they are?

Chiara.

- Yes, you. -Yeah.

Obviously when you take a performance or a piece of performance in a museum, you find that the museum is already full of information.

You have to ask some questions...

as where do you place the work, what is around you

and what connections or disconnections you can create

with the things that are around.

Once you have identified where the work is going to take place,

there are different subversions or interruptions that you can bring.

For example, at some point I did some work in the National Museum,

and I find myself with Giulia there to look at the room.

And we were in a room where there were lots of ancient sculptures

from the Roman Empire

and we found ourselves in relation with perfect male busts,  
idealized beauty.

And we thought it would be very interesting to put my body  
within this space.

There were connections because we both came from the same provenance,  
the same geographical area.

In Italy of course.

And both bodies were beautiful even though with different characteristics.

So these busts were very beautiful bodies. I have a beautiful body.

The difference is that these busts were broken. They were broken bodies.

I have a whole body.

This bust had no life, whereas my body was alive,

so there was a tension, the position created  
between my body and these bodies in the room.

Really interesting. Thank you for sharing that.

Chisato, how do you disrupt the galleries or museum spaces?

Disruption.

Well, that project...

that was in a small museum.

It was very small, sweet museum

and I was thinking about how we're using that space.

My project had a set...

it was quite low, the ceiling, and it was a question of  
how am I gonna set up everything?

The projector, obviously we had to use,

we had a technological team to help me out,

so we had lots of discussions about that and we spoke with the staff at the  
museum.

We asked what was going to be possible

and I feel like that was a disruption in itself.

And there's another project as well.

It's called...

"Deaf for 4'33"

Which means 4 minutes and 33 seconds.

There's a American music composer,

a piece of conversation called "Four minutes 33 Seconds".

I don't know if you know about this.

But there's a man who comes and sits for the piano,

then the clock starts, he sets the clock, and he doesn't play anything, it's silent.

The audience just sits there,

and they're reacting, however they're reacting.

But the sound of the room becomes the music

for four minutes and 33 seconds.

Then he closes the piano lid and walks off.

It's my deaf perspective on that.

When I was creating this, I was having discussions

about where is going to be the first place we're going to have it.

The Firstsite gallery.

The Firstsite Gallery was the place where we decided to have that,

and that was in Colchester.

And I was talking with them about it

and they have a very old piano there.

So we agreed I was able to use that,

and my aim is to explore the sounds of the piano

and how would I explore that?

Well, I'm gonna open it up

and that is very much a disruption.

So I brought tools with me.

I bought clamps and all sorts of tools.

I would sort of hit it and feel the vibrations.

And I feel these vibrations,

and those were the sounds of the piano that I was using for the piece,

and I was really interested in that.

And it was a bit risky, obviously.

The piano is made of wood  
and parts of it would fly off sometimes,  
so it was a bit risky.

I mean, it's performance guys, so that's very disruptive.

Luckily Firstsite Gallery were very welcoming,  
and they absolutely were like, "you do your thing".

So I'm really grateful that they said that actually.

When the performance is happening, it's one hour and five minutes.

It would happen at 33 minutes past the hour.

And so it becomes sort of more and more distorted over time.

It was more and more of a disruption. So by the end it was just...  
you can imagine.

Firstsite were very happy.

They were like, that's a really beautiful piece of art.

And they took pieces of the piano as to keep in their archive  
pieces that had been broken off and disrupted to keep in their archive.

- That's really interesting. - I thought that was really interesting.

Absolutely. Thank you.

Dalibor, same question. How does your work disrupt gallery spaces?

Well...

my work and I, or should I say "we",

"we" as a group Per.Art.

We disrupt gallery spaces, for example, where when we are doing

"We Are Not Monsters"

We disrupt the gallery space.

We change their schedule

and we do something really different

that is that is not...

for example, some projection of some...

of some paintings...

some... How do you say in English?

Just showing some paintings from one hour to...

from one hour to something like that.

Or just some...

something other. Yes.

We disrupt in a way, because this is really unusual.

I think what fascinates me about

how you are all disrupting in different ways is

that you seem to be...

Disrupting the codified, the implicit codified rules  
of museum and gallery spaces.

I even observed when I arrived to come to this space,

almost immediately, the way I was moving through the space changed.

I adopted this kind of gallery walk,

where I'm walking more slowly and something happens in my body

and everybody's following the rules of how we access.

And I think that Chiara, by your focus on how proximate you are to audiences,

there's something disrupting around that,

Chisato, you are breaking pianos and lying on pillows

and also noise, making noise in gallery spaces.

And I guess, I'm quite...

I would be, I suppose, cause I'm biased,

I'm quite seduced by how deaf and disabled artists disrupt these spaces,

sometimes by our access, needs,

that we might access work through touch or we might make noises

when we're not supposed to,

and I think there's something really exciting about...

how the work of deaf and disabled artists intersect

with these gallery spaces.

This has been such an interesting conversation for me,

and I'm sure for everybody else here.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts,

your experiences so openly and so generously.

It's been a pleasure.

- Thank you. - Thank you.