

Access Ideas & Insights Podcast

Transcript – Episode 1. Accessible Curation

**[00:00:00]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Accessible Arts acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. We pay our respects to elders past and present and recognise their enduring connection to this land, its culture, and its communities. We honour the long history of storytelling, cultural exchange, and artistic expression that has flourished here for thousands of years.

Personally, I would like to acknowledge disabled and Deaf First Nations people. Always was, always will be.

Hello and welcome to Access Ideas and Insights podcast brought to you by Accessible Arts. I'm Bedelia Lowrenčev and I'll be your host for the next six episodes. For any Accessible Arts fans out there, you might have guessed that this podcast was developed as an extension of our Access Ideas and Insights hybrid series.

That means we're keeping the bold conversations going, diving into fresh ideas, and tackling the big questions around access and inclusion across the art sector. Each episode I'll be joined by leading experts, including artists with disability to cultural sector influencers. This podcast is a new initiative for Accessible Arts, and from the start, access has been at the core of its creation.

As part of this development, we've worked closely with the Deaf advisory group to ensure this series is reaching our audiences. Each episode will be released with a transcript, Auslan video, and captions. Accessible Arts acknowledges access is a place of learning. So, throughout the series, we'll continue to develop the access for the podcast.

So that we can be a catalyst for change within the arts and cultural sector.

This episode contains themes of ableism, marginalisation, isolation, mental health.

Ever been to an exhibition and wished it was more accessible. Maybe it had tactile elements or perhaps a more creative approach to Audio Description. Well. You're in luck because this episode is all about accessible curation.

Exploring it from the two key perspectives, the artist and the curator. First, we'll be hearing from Bailee Lobb, a multidisciplinary artist from Aotearoa who will share their insights from an artist's point of view. Then we'll head even further afield to chat with Amanda Cachia, a curator, writer, advocate, and art historian based in the US for a curatorial perspective on accessibility in the arts.

Let's kick off the conversation with artist Bailee Lobb.

Bailee, thank you so much for joining us today. Um, I have to say I am quite a fan, um, and I actually think quite a few listeners would be as well. You carry such beautiful knowledge around the perspective of an artist creating accessible works, but also that sort of curatorial shaping with access in mind or accessible solutions in mind. I'm curious though, as someone who's kind of straddled both, uh, what do you think are kind of the main differences between being the artist creating accessible work versus being a curator shaping accessible exhibitions?

**[00:03:31]** **Bailee Lobb:** That's a really good question.

Um, I actually don't think there should be much difference. The best accessible exhibitions I've been in that have been, um, you know, really successful from the point of bringing everyone in and letting everybody experience things, they have started from the place of access. So it's been the first thing that's been considered, and I feel like that's very much the same for me in making work that's accessible.

It’s where I start, it's what is the approach of this going to be? Um, and what do I need to, like, what do I need to portray and get across and to who? Um, so for me it feels like to do it well, um, in curation or in art making, it really needs to be from the beginning. So, I don't think that that there is a huge difference.

I guess the um, where, where there would be a bit of a, um, divergence is that in the curatorial space, you'd be potentially working with a lot of different artists who may or may not have considered that at the inception point of their creation process.

**[00:04:45]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Yeah, I think I, I mean, I think you are just like getting the nail on the head, like from the starters conversation is the importance of there not being a verses, that there's an intrinsic, like symbiosis between curator intention with access and the artist's intention as well.

Um, I think with that in mind, uh, what sort of impact does it have then when curators prioritise access from the outset? Like how does this influence your creative practice?

**[00:05:15]** **Bailee Lobb:** I love it when a curator has thought about access before they've contacted me. Um, it makes conversations so much easier, especially around, um, I guess what access means.

Quite a few of my works have quite different engagement, um, models than works that you would often see in a gallery, and I think. When I then start adding conversations around access, around like what people can do with these works, if the curator's not prepared for that, if they've not thought about it already, they can get quite confused as to what, what is the way you engage with my work.

And what is the access component of that? And for me, like both of those things are really crucial to preserve. So, when the curator already has a really good understanding of, of, of the access limitations of the space, of things that they need to consider of what they can, um, accommodate and where the gaps might be, that then means that I can, um, work with them to really understand where we need to go together. I've, I've worked with a few curators who've not thought about it at all, and I've worked with some amazing ones who it's been part of their process the whole way through. And for me as the artist, the conversation is just kind of like joyous when it's already part of the conversation.

It's much harder when I'm trying to shape that and say actually these two facets of engaging with the work are really important, but they're equally important. I'm not willing to sacrifice one over the other.

**[00:07:00]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Yeah. I really love some like key words you bring out, which is like engagement, preservation of access, and like very much like ‘we’ language that looks at how in tandem with, I guess the organisation and the artist. That actual like accessible curation is possible and is a then a product of joy.

With that, I'm kind of curious to get you to talk about a particular work, um, the work that you made, ‘How Do You Sleep at Night’, um, I guess just for our listeners who might not be as mega fans as the rest of us, if you could just give a little bit of context about the work and then as well, kind of how that process happened and how the accessible curation comes into play in that work.

**[00:07:42]** **Bailee Lobb:** So, How Do You Sleep At Night is a performance and installation work that explores my relatively combative relationship with sleep. Um, I have a lot of, uh, kind of difficulty getting to sleep, staying asleep, um, and a lot of that is because throughout the day my tolerance to the environment kind of dissipates.

And so I need, um. Quite a lot of support in that area, and I wanted to explore that in my work. But it is, it was quite a challenging thing to explore because the way that I wanted to do it was, um, maybe, uh, felt a little strange for some people.

The work consists of a series of soft sculptures that, uh, fit around my body to support it. And then also, uh, some sensory supports. So, a weighted blanket that's made of glass beads and um, some objects for fiddling. And then there is the performance element and that is basically me moving through the, uh, the process of getting rid of that excess energy from my body and preparing for sleep and then going to sleep in the gallery.

I think the most important thing for me with this work was getting the audience to sit in that vulnerable space with me where they could consider what their relationship was sleep was like, and what it meant to need support to sleep beyond the pharmaceutical. It meant that the, the team looking after that exhibition and, and um, kind of allowing me to do this performance work in this space, they really needed to support the vulnerability in that environment and part of that meant, I guess one guiding the audience. So, when they came into the gallery and found me sleeping, um, a lot of people thought that I wasn't real or, um, but were kind of quite confused. And so, they really had to facilitate that, um, moment of understanding and then guiding them into the vulnerable kind of area.

And then the other one was that they actually did have to physically look after me because I was asleep. And so, they needed to make sure that, um, nobody would approach me or, um, you know, spook me, touch me, anything like that. And, um, that work, I don't think would've, wouldn't have been possible without their willingness to give me what I needed to perform the work. And also, what the audience needed in order to engage with the work.

**[00:10:35]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** I think what's really exciting about the relationship, you talk about, about artist and curator is focusing on vulnerability. Um, I think as well, it's about the guiding into vulnerability and the capacity for both a curator to offer that and an artist to meet in this sort of like equal space.

Um. One thing you brought up was about tolerance for environment. Um, and I just love those words. I think it's such an exciting concept to consider how an artist makes an environment more tolerable in regards to their access needs or engagement for themselves and for the audience. And with that, it reminds me of one of your works I experienced, um, ‘In Bathing Bask’.

Now this is quite a visual experience. Do you wanna describe a bit, kind of the work and, uh, expand on where that kind of came from, um, what inspired it, uh, how it, it is for you looking at that tolerance for environment.

**[00:11:38]** **Bailee Lobb:** Before, before I touch on that, I actually wanted to, um, like when, when you were talking just then about the, um, tolerance and the relationship between curator and artist and the vulnerability there.

I feel like a lot of that comes down to, um, the different like, areas of expertise we have. Like the, the person who's creating the exhibition, um, often has like a really good understanding of the space and, and what it, you know how people engage with it, and then the artist has that same understanding of their work.

So it feels to me like they really like, yeah, getting vulnerable together means that you can really. Build towards what you are trying to achieve.

**[00:12:21]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Yeah, I agree. I think it's that nuance of, uh, like knowledge accepting and sharing, um, that creates a sort of reciprocity between, um, established institutional structures and artists that are trying to manipulate and change the space to engage better.

**[00:12:39]** **Bailee Lobb:** Um, a hundred percent.

**[00:12:40]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Yeah. But yeah, going back to your work,

**[00:12:43]** **Bailee Lobb:** so, um, In Bathing Bask, it's a series of different coloured bubbles, um, and the audience can go inside the bubble. This work is quite well known in, in terms of my work, but it also is, um, very like it. It very much is about trying to change the space to make it more tolerable.

One thing that I quite often struggle with is that our spaces that we kind of live in day to day are quiet, you know, heavily linear. They're very, you know, strong horizontal lines, strong vertical lines, lots of square edges. Um, often they're quite visually overwhelming, but not in, um, not in a very clean way.

**[00:13:27]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Mm-hmm.

**[00:13:28]** **Bailee Lobb:** Uh, so these bubbles came about as a way to kind of bathe in like kind of quite clean visual information. So, when you go inside them everything that's inside that space is then kind of filtered by the colour that you're in. So, you feel like you are bathing in the colour. The spaces are in inflatable, so they have fans running in them. Um, those fans dull the sound, but they also, round the edges of the space, so there's no kind of clear delineation between the floor, the walls, and the ceiling. They just kind of meld into each other. And for me, those spaces are deeply relaxing. I made my first one when I was living in Sydney and I, um, actually used it to help me calm down and, and, uh, try to get to sleep, and I loved it so much that then I I worked on that idea further and I didn't know when I made that first one, what I was making the work about. And by the time I made In Bathing Bask a series, I knew that these were stim spaces and they were environments, you know, temporary environments to put inside an environment that didn't work for me.

I worked with lots of different colours and shapes and, and kind of formats of these spaces because I wanted to. I guess experiment with how different colours made me feel, but also, um, how different size spaces made me feel. I found it really interesting watching the audiences come through those because everyone had a favourite.

It wasn't always, you know, like within a group you might have one person who loved the big blue one. Um, they felt really relaxed and it felt really free. But then someone else in the group might like the small hot pink one. Um. But I did find that there was kind of quite an interesting, the, the way that people responded to the spaces were was quite interesting because the forms of them were quite postural.

So, the little one, you could only really sit in that or kind of curl up in it, whereas. Big blue, um, you can move around in it. We held a yoga class in it. Um, it kind of encouraged movement and um, so that one saw a lot of people doing, you know, physical stimming, spinning around inside it, that kind of thing.

Um, yeah, which was lovely.

**[00:15:50]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Big blue that's the one I was lucky enough to experience. And yeah, I think everything you talk about that sort of like clean visual information, um, I definitely experienced it was like this softening of the edges of quite harsh environments. Um, I think what's so beautiful about the art and the way you talk about.

Where you stem your ideas from is so deeply personal, um, and yet has such like universality to it when it comes to your sort of works, there's, you know, of course we all experience successes. Um, but as well sometimes, you know, we can experience failures as part of innovation. Um, I think definitely access is experimenting, you know, we learn from our missteps and collaborating with curators.

Any tips that you could share with anyone who's trying to carve new ways in engagement in the arts?

**[00:16:45]** **Bailee Lobb:** I think my practices is full of failure. Like I take a very experimental approach to making. And what you see in the gallery has often gone through many, many, many iterations to get there. Um, and part of that is about the, the experience.

So, um, as the, um, is the approach gonna be right to cater to, you know, the most people. I tend to have sacrificial objects that I will cut up and redo and change around if it's not quite working and, and do lots of testing like that when it comes down to that next phase when I'm speaking with curators and, um, maybe actually like working out how to present this in the gallery. I've often done all of that kind of hacking up of stuff. Previously, so I've got a baseline level of my own work being, um, access focused. But I think the, the key thing for me is probably to get the understanding of that same baseline for the space and, and for the, um, what the, as well as for the space, what the exhibition baseline is gonna be.

So, when I've worked with curators who, for example, wanted to, um, have, um, an easy read guide for the whole exhibition, which is amazing by the way. Um, it was really, um, interesting to know what they needed in order to generate that. And for my works, because they were so different to the rest of the show, um, they actually had some illustrations made of them to show how to engage with them.

Um, and so I think the kind of, the biggest thing for me in that was that we ran out of time a little bit and it was because the person creating that guy didn't know enough about the works early enough. So I think when you are, um, creating a really strong access focus in your curate curation, you need to make sure those, those people are brought in early enough that they can tell you what they need.

**[00:19:12]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Um, I totally agree. I think we can all relate to the sentiment of being like just earlier, everything earlier and earlier. Yeah. So it's the thing, especially around access. And I guess I would just wanna roll onto one more question and that would be about the relationship between curation and disability culture, and whether curation is inherently an act of access and art making.

**[00:19:36]** **Bailee Lobb:** I think it can be, but I don't think it always is. For some people, the way that they approach the world means that their curatorial expressions are going to be forms of creative access, but that is not the way that everybody approaches the world, and so I don't think it always is. I think it can be.

**[00:20:02]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** That's exactly it. You know, we all come with our own experiences, which informs our practice. Um, and I think, you know, it's important to realize that, you know, as curators as well, we are, you know, impacted by our own biases and understanding of the world around us.

**[00:20:18]** **Bailee Lobb:** Yeah. And, and we are also, like, curators are also, um, I guess like shaping their, shaping a story when they're developing an exhibition and, and so if that's not central to their story and it's not part of their inherent approach to life, then it is gonna be very hard to center that in creative access. Um, so I think it does, it either needs to Yeah, come from, like an approach personal to them, or it needs to be part of the story that they're telling, otherwise it's, it's not gonna come through.

**[00:20:52]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Definitely think it's something about when we are to be curated, there needs to be a sincere, um, story and dialogue between the curator and the artist. Um, because it's not just about kind of, you know, topical disability and giving it a moment of being, you know, spot lit, but actual like enduring change, which needs that longer storyline between curator, institution and artist. Yeah. Thank you so much, Bailee, for your time.

**[00:21:24]** **Bailee Lobb:** Thank you very much for having me.

**[00:21:32]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Now let's flip the conversation towards the curator with Amanda Cachia.

We have with us all the way from Houston, Texas, Amanda Cachia, curator, consultant, rider, advocate, and art historian. Amanda, thank you so much for joining us today. I'm so excited to have this conversation on accessible curation. Um, I'm gonna start off right into the questions, and first one I'd love to know is your perspective of the role of curation in shaping art and representation across different cultural context.

Just a light question to start us off.

**[00:22:11]** **Amanda Cachia:** Sure. Yeah, I mean, it's a great question to start us off because I think curators wield a lot of power, um, in the art world, as I'm sure a lot of us are already aware. And so that means that curators in my mind have a responsibility to thinking more equitably in, in the kinds of exhibitions and the kinds of artists that they're choosing to, um, include in their exhibitions and in their displays.

And that includes disability. Um, so of course I am somebody that is drawn to that topic because I identify as a disabled art historian and as a disabled curator. I was born with a physical disability. I'm a person of short stature and I have a rare form of dwarfism. And so, you know, pretty early on in my career when I was a young person, I'd go to museums and see that there was a lack of representation of disability in the museum.

And so then, you know, as time went on, I wanted to be a curator. I wanted to work with artists. Um, and I was always interested in issues of social justice. So, I kind of brought that into my curating practice. And then at some point I realised I really needed to dedicate my work to including disabled artists.

And for the last decade, well it been over a decade now that I've really. Focused exclusively on, um, representing disabled artists and thinking about, um, disabled themes in my practice in a way that's very activist. So, it's very intentional because I recognise that there is a gap. Um, and so, um, curating is this really one wonderful role where you can, you can be a leader and really, um, you know, mold and shape the directions of exhibitions so that they can make a positive change in a transformation in the art world.

**[00:24:00]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Hmm. Yeah, I feel like some things I really pull from what you're saying is almost this role as a curator, that it's all about like facilitating and space making and about, you know, how we can resist and occupy space. And I think, I don't know, I feel like there potentially feels something inherent in disabled culture about curation.

Um, what are your senses in thinking about like disability culture and curation, having that sort of kindredness, do you think there's something there?

**[00:24:29]** **Amanda Cachia:** Yes and no because I think, um, you know, historically and up and even till recently curating has, has been sort of perceived as a, a bit of a gatekeeping role.

Like, you know, it's kind of elitist in some ways because they can actually decide who gets to, to come and go from the museum, right? And, and mostly just who gets to stay and who gets to be included or even who gets to be collected. For the museums, you know, museum collect permanent collections. Um, and so it's really, the curator bears a lot of responsibility for that.

And so, people have felt really excluded historically from curatorial practices. So, it, it really does mean a lot for the curator to think more equitably, um, in terms of, as I said, representing different kinds of bodies in the museum. Um, and so disability culture is, is one of course that wants to promote inclusivity and wants to promote equality and, and disability justice and fairness, et cetera.

And disability culture is, is very much also about community. Um, and so, and networks of care. Um, so there's like, I think the alliance would be that, you know, the word curator even means, to care for. Um, so it's kind of like, there's, there's a bit of a tension I think that is going on in, in curating because while it does mean to care, I don't think curators have necessarily, um, cared for different populations and communities. In the ways that they should.

So if that sounds like I'm being a bit of a harsh critic, I guess I am because, um, the work hasn't really been done in the way that I think it needs to, to, you know, that curators really need to reckon with this kind of ableist past that the practices of museums and to be, again, more caring towards its, um, different community members, including the disabled population.

**[00:26:26]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Hmm. Yeah, I definitely like, you know, can speak to my own experience about like curators and exactly, I think it's beautiful that you capture that, you know, when we pull apart the sort of bureaucracy of the language, it comes down to being a carer and a facilitator. And especially when you bring up that equitable importance, you know, when you are curating.

And I guess, um, speaking on being able to see the evolution of artists and the importance of, you know, that gauging between independent versus institutional opportunity. I was curious about the role of independent versus, um, institutional curation in shaping narratives around disability.

**[00:27:05]** **Amanda Cachia:** Yeah. Well, I mean, just speaking from my own trajectory as an independent curator, um, I mean I certainly was an institutional curator for many years before deciding to go back to do my PhD.

And so, when I was an institutional curator, when I was a um, gallery director and curator, I, I was curating shows that were revolved around different kinds of, you know, as I said, um, social justice issues. So, I curated a show on feminism and art, and I curated a show on Indigenous art and, um, I curated a show on war and violence and all these kinds of things, but I hadn't yet kind of turned to disability. And then I went and did my PhD when I decided to focus exclusively on disability and then I curated shows independently. So, it was a, a good decade long practice of curating independently, and I sort of developed a reputation, I think for myself as a. The curator, curator that is an expert in that area. So, I've curated now over 15 exhibitions on disability art, and I've curated those mostly, um, in Canada and the United States.

And, um, that's been really gratifying. And I think part of the challenge of being a independent curator is that. I come with, um, a lot of pedagogy for museums to learn, right. So things like, you know, what is accessible curation and how can I serve my disabled audiences? And what does it mean to have, um, you know, captioning and alt text and more benches? And how do we hang the art so that it meets the, the scales and the heights of different audience members? And how can we curate. More sensorial, um, ways of, you know, engaging with art, like tactile art and all of these things. And so, um, that, you know, has been a big responsibility as an independent curator.

And sometimes I wish, oh, it'd be nice if I was just running my own um, you know, a museum in some ways my own gallery. 'cause then I could, I wouldn't have to keep kind of going through that process, right. Of educating the new institution that I'm working with. But on the other hand, I think it's good that I've been able to be in a position where I am spreading that knowledge. Um, 'cause I think over time it does seem to work.

**[00:29:21]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Hmm, you've worked in like a variety of forms, which I think is something quite unique, um, perspective wise, because I think you're able to, you know, answer a question about the, how different art forms and how different forms of advocacy and education are creating access in distinct ways.

Um, I'm really curious, especially 'cause you know, you've got this very like, academic practice as well as a very artistic practice. And curious about how that sort of breadth offers, you know, something more than just, you know, a single way of advocating. How do you see your function in both academia and the arts informing accessible curation?

**[00:30:08]** **Amanda Cachia:** Yeah, that's a really good question. I mean, I think as a trained art historian, I'm able to, um, things that I've been writing about lately, like journal articles and um, other kinds of chapters that I'm writing for different kinds of edited volumes is that I bring in the ability to draw from the past, to draw from art history and to say, oh, there is something that happened during surrealism, for example, or something that happened during Dadaism or during Fluxus, that actually reminds me a lot of what contemporary disability art is trying to achieve. So, I'm, I'm able to make those connections between the art history of the past and the art history of the present and to be able to, you know, contextualise 'them within a, within a disability studies, uh, theoretical lens.

Um, and so I think that's what kind of makes me unique is that there's very few art historians that, um, are really kind of up on the whole disability studies discourse, right. And theory. Um, so I've been really enjoying kind of marrying and bringing those two worlds together and sharing that knowledge through my writing, um, practice and through my publishing in my books.

And then, because I also have a very close relationship with disabled artists, like some of them I’ve been working with pretty consistently for over a decade, and I've really been, you know, we've nurtured a friendship with each other, but we've also kind of really nurtured, like at this level of trust, it's been really generative to be able to bring in all those layers to my activist work.

Um, and to bring this their, you know, why their work is so important to, um, the public's, um, attention.

**[00:31:50]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** I, I find it so refreshing to hear, I guess a disability historian and disability arts historian, um, actually articulating how arts history has a flow on effect. I feel like we can often feel there might be a gap or, um, in knowledge between the disabled community and the arts history community.

And then, so I'm very curious then about, you know, the disability arts history and what its evolution has been. What if you've been able to pull out as kind of peak critical moments for disability arts history and how it is evolving or has evolved?

**[00:32:28]** **Amanda Cachia:** I mean, there's been myself and a few others too, where it's like, you know, because the art history that we often get and everyone knows this is like, unfortunately, it's like usually white and it's male.

Um, and so, you know, I draw from colleague, art history colleagues who are trying to, you know, pick apart and read, retell the canon from a different perspective, namely the perspective that involves gender. So that puts women first, um, or, or that puts Indigenous people first, or that puts, um, people that have, um, a different sexuality first.

You know, so it's intersectional and it's like centering the perspectives of those that have minority identities, and that includes disability. So I have a really great template, so I'm not kind of doing this in isolation, which is good because I, I can see that there's other others out there who are writing the queer art histories and who are writing the women's art histories and so on. So that's been really fantastic. But also, what is uniquely important about disability? That can be. Also added to, you know, additive to that. Um, but also one that also like builds on what has already been done before. Right. So, I mean, I think that I've been able to draw these connections and say that, you know, while they might have been like the white male artist who was contributing to abstract expressionism, for example, or to minimalism from the 1960s.

That, guess what disabled artists have contributed to minimalism too. It's just that they were really not recognised for that work or, you know, brought into the discourse at all. So, by making these sort of, these connections apparent, I think it's sort of really opening people's eyes, so to speak. And, um, it's exciting, but I'm also being very critical to say that you.

That's a, an omission that is regretful, for example, with Fluxus art a very radical movement where artists from the sixties and seventies were really trying to experiment with the senses and the sensory realm, and they did all these kinds of bodily experiments. And I thought to myself, well, why don't they experiment with, um, the senses that the disabled body brings to the table? Because what's so gen, what could be generative about blindness and deafness, for example? And those kinds of, um, senses that operate quite differently. Um, and some people would say that the, that those, uh, bodily experiences are limited, but I disagree with them and say actually they're, um, bringing something really interesting to the table about how our bodies operate, uh, differently.

And it makes us more, uh, complex and it's richer. So, these rich experiences that I think are really, um, tangible and that haven't actually been folded into our disability, art histories.

**[00:35:17]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Thank you so much, Amanda, for sharing all that rich, um, information about the history of disability within the arts. I think a lot of us in the disabled community feel like there isn't a legacy for us, or, you know, because of intentional, unintentional mar marginalisation, we end up feeling, yeah, we are not participants in the rigorous arts evolution that happened. Um, and it's just really awesome in this short chat to hear from an expert such as yourself that we were there. And, um, I think what's exciting about your practices, I feel like you bring such reverence but also rage. Um. To the ongoing evolution of disability arts in the end, what is it we want audiences to get from accessible curation?

**[00:36:04]** **Amanda Cachia:** Yeah, I think, um, I mean, you know, I curated a show in the fall at The Zimmerli Art Museum, which is at Rutgers University in New Jersey. The show ran from September to December of last year and we, um, I called the exhibition Smoke and Mirrors.

That is a very common term, um, that we've all kind of come across. And when you say that something is smoke and mirrors, it means that there's kind of like this somewhat of an illusion of something, like something being pulled over your eyes and, um. The idea of that, the title of that was me to say that, um, because all the artists in the show, there were 14 of them, they're all disabled, and they were all making work about issues of access in the museum and how issues of access in the museum.

Um, oftentimes, you know, a non-disabled person will go to a museum, and they won't realise that the a space is actually quite inaccessible for disabled people. And, um, the museum leads us to believe that it's at all times. So that's what I mean by this kind of smoke and mirrors, right. That it's like we think we going into an accessible space, but actually it's not. So, the idea that I was trying to convey to, um, non-disabled audiences is that you should take a deeper look at what's actually going on in the museum, and I want that to be revealed.

**[00:37:32]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** I was literally next gonna ask about, you know, the sort of legacy you wanna leave, but I feel like you really answered that. And, you know, in talking about the desire to reveal, um, to exactly create, uh, a shared understanding between, you know, non-disabled and disabled and beyond. What's some advice you would give to artists and curators when working with, you know, disability in both culturally and in literal accessibility? Um, what's your advice for working and integrating beyond sort of public programs, the sort of, um, easier programming spaces for you know, marginalised bodies. How do we create curation that lives in the longer collection in exhibitions and galleries? What's your advice there?

**[00:38:20]** **Amanda Cachia:** Yeah, I mean, beyond just like, you know, for me, these acts of just invitation to disability community to be a part of the museum. Um, so obviously like, you know, artists exhibiting their work, collecting work by disabled artists, hiring disabled curators, and um, other kinds of disabled people to work within your institution, but also to kind of develop a, um, disability access um, you know, consultancy group, um, within your community that they, they could advise on in terms of policies, you know, policies and planning for that museum. They can really help to shape that, um, in ways that are really transformative and, and that are permanent. Right. And long last. And also to think beyond just, I mean the architecture of a museum is obviously important in terms of thinking about ramps and lighting and exhibition display and way finding and benches and all kinds of furniture.

Um, there's all of those kinds of policies. But in terms of programming, I think, you know, I highlighted just all of those other ways that you can do that work too. But also just conceptually, I. think it is important for museums to understand disability is like an ongoing, and thinking about access is an ongoing process that it's never fixed. It's always changing. I can give you an example that I've curated, um, exhibitions where I think, oh, I've, I've done it. I've made an accessible exhibition. And then the next thing I know, a visitor comes in and says, oh, well you forgot about this need that I have as a disabled person. How does that accommodate my need? And I'll say, well, we didn't do that.

So there's always going to be. Um, it's, it's gonna be hard to satisfy the needs of every single person that has a disability. And so I think the advice then is to, and just because that's the case, you shouldn't shy away from it, that you should still kind of treat it as an exercise in adaptability and, um, being able to be flexible and be able to change and revise your exhibition, display even on a daily basis if necessary. And so that really excites me as an accessible curation is actually organic. It’s molded and shifts and changes according to the needs of the people that come through the doors.

**[00:40:35]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** Hmm. Oh my goodness, Amanda, I could listen to you yarn all day. Um, yeah. Thank you so much for your time, your generosity and your knowledge sharing. Um, you are an amazing resource and the community is so lucky to have you. Um, and I'm so excited to see the ongoing work that you generate.

**[00:40:59]** **Amanda Cachia:** Thank you very much.

**[00:41:05]** **Bedelia Lowrenčev:** That's a wrap on this episode of Access Ideas and Insights. This podcast is proudly produced by Accessible Arts and Kiera Brew Kurec with sound design by Tralala Blip. Access consulting was provided by Macro Impact Consulting and our advisory group. We also thank our Auslan interpreters. This podcast series is proudly supported by the City of Sydney and Create NSW, the principal funding partner of Accessible Arts.