

## 2024 KT Online Conference

### Art Showcase

*Presenter:*

Beth Stoffmacher

Sponsored by AIR's Center on Knowledge Translation  
Disability and Rehabilitation Research (KTDRR)  
<https://ktdrr.org/conference2024/index.html>

Transcript for audio/video file on YouTube:  
<https://youtu.be/lbnLifYhA>

Beth Stoffmacher: Hi everyone. My name is Beth Stoffmacher, and I am the arts specialist at the National Arts and Disability Center. I had the privilege of helping the conference look for and promote to find artists with disabilities so that they could feature their work in the online gallery. Then I work at the National Arts and Disability Center (NADC), and in 1994, the NADC was created to promote the inclusion of audiences and artists with disabilities into all facets of the arts community. The NADC aims to strengthen the capacity of the mainstream arts community to include artists and audience with disabilities, and promote the professional development of artists with disabilities into all areas of the arts community. Next slide, please.

The NADC started in 1994, when a group of artists came to the UCLA Taron Center for a request for training and resources to advance the careers for artists with disabilities. We were the first and center of its kind with an online presence. We offer free and online art gallery for artists to showcase their art, both within the United States and international, and then a California directory of artists with disabilities. We post calls for art on our social media and our listservs, funding opportunities, articles, casting calls, local exhibit information. We promote artists if they have a new book or a new series that they want to share all through our social media accounts, et cetera.

Next slide please. From 2002 to 2019, the NADC worked with the California Arts Council. We had a contract with the California Arts Council to provide grants both to artists with disabilities and arts organizations. It was called the Arts and Accessibility Grants Program, and we learned so much in this program. In 2020, when everything shut down, we were given a grant of \$500,000, and we were able to help 116 arts organizations and artists with disabilities. In that year, when most things shut down, artists were able to showcase their art, create new projects. Arts organizations were able to put their programs online so that they could continue their work and support the art of artists with disabilities. Next slide, please. Through that work, we learned so much and some of the things that we did learn that artists, well, excuse me, I apologize. The artists were awarded activities to create work at local arts exhibits to record professional quality songs, to publish new literary works, and they earned their money through the sales of their art, and attend new workshops or new classes to

create their craft and to increase connections with other artists and learn new skills. Next slide, please.

As I said, I was given the opportunity to work with the conference to send out the call for original artwork for the online art exhibit. And this year's theme, as you hoped know, I'm sure by now, was to ensure full and equitable inclusion of people with disabilities from a wide range of disabilities. And next slide, please. We were very fortunate to have several artists reach out, and I talked to them about the different themes. They had to choose one of the following topics to create their new work about the importance of relationships and exchange of information, the need for more inclusive ways of generating and sharing research, the importance of sharing research findings with people with disabilities, including those from underserved communities, and the best way to share their research findings with people with disabilities, including those from underserved communities.

Their artwork should have been focused that one of the requirements was that the artists had to be a practicing artist with a disability and have previous experience creating public artwork, meet deadlines and associated with the conference. All artists needed to agree to these terms so that their image could be shared on the center for KTDRR during and after the conference, through its website, social media, and other media channels. All artwork had to be original and created specifically for this submission. It had to be appropriate for public viewing. It had to support, enhance understanding of one of the proposed topics, and it had to be translatable to a virtual environment such as an image, a video, a song, or a digital product.

The types of artwork that's featured in the beautiful online exhibit are things such as paintings and drawings, photos. There's some comics, sculptures, and musical pieces. To follow are some selected artist statements in their own words, and some of the art that will be featured in the exhibit or has been. Artist Jordan Taku Johnson said that his artwork is photographs of ordinary objects. These photographs can assist non-dominant and non-verbal groups in accessing information. Artist Kurt Westin is a legally blind artist. I've had the privilege of knowing him since, I think it was probably early in my years at UCLA, probably 1997. He's a legally blind artist. He creates artwork that involves his own deprivation of perception. He created a portrait of a blind person utilizing braille. The image is mixed media piece, which combines graphic design, photography, and braille dots to form the word communicate.

Artist Patricia Doktor did her art about Jane Goodall. She created a piece and feels that her work not only transformed our understanding of the relationship between humans and the natural world, but also emphasized the importance of relationships in driving positive change. And she included one of her quotes in her art that said, "The most important thing is to involve people in the life around them and to make them understand that what they do, however small it may seem, does make a difference." Artist Merik Berghs feels that his art depicts cuddly dolls, meaning other dolls who don't share the same backgrounds or opportunities. They meet in a place and time where their identities and their worldview were just beginning to evolve before they're influenced by doctrine, cultural prejudice, or community superstition. The

image represents how important first relationships are to informing and accepting empathy.

Rob Ott, he developed a song about relating among human beings with empathy, which is a form of love. Once Loved is an instrumental piece that evokes a memory that at some point in our lives, all of us were loved. If we start there, that all people, no matter their strengths and weaknesses, no matter their abilities or limitations, we all benefit with greater knowing when we begin with an open mind and a loving heart. So over the years, one of the things that we did learn from artists with disabilities, as these are the kinds of things they mentioned that would really help them advance their careers and get a start in this field. Lots of times artists are looking just for a physical space to showcase their work, such as this wonderful opportunity with Kate, this conference, as well as grant funding. Of course, we all need money. Art supplies are expensive, so grant funding to create the artwork.

Assistance with writing grants. Many, many of the artists I worked with had never written a grant, so I spent numerous hours working one-on-one with artists, helping them develop the content for the grant, and then of course supporting them. Some of them have never developed a budget, so assistance with writing grants. If you're creating grant programs, be thoughtful of that to offer accommodations and assistance. Hiring assistance to help with creating their new work. Sometimes physicality or other issues may be hard, and artists need to hire assistants to help them in either their writing, their photography or their visual art. Mentorships are so, so important. Networking with other professionals, the opportunity to attend classes and conferences and to be included in all kinds of art exhibits. And then of course, professional development opportunities also are always something that people are looking forward to enhance their own skills and trade. Next slide, please.

And other things that really help artists with disabilities nurture their careers are coaching, career coaching, and mentoring. Again, the shared online space, peer mentorship, artist residencies, resources and information on how to self-publish or how to create a resume, a headshot, those kinds of things. So we're all looking for the same thing, right, when we're trying to develop our career. Next slide, please. Artists want to see more of places to gather, network, share with other artists with disabilities, increased employment in front and behind the camera. Promotion of artists, not as a disabled artist, but also as just an artist, and venues such as inclusive, accessible places to showcase artwork for all artists such as galleries, museums, and shows online. Artists want to see more artists as teachers, people that look like them, teaching them additions include actors with disabilities, hiring actors with disabilities in tv, film and theater, and also hiring actors with disabilities to play actors with disabled parts. The ability for artists to share their stories so others can relate to them.

A lot of artists that apply to our grant, the highest amount of funds that someone could receive is \$3,000, and even that amount would affect some of our artists' social security and disability insurance. So they needed other ways to break the money up so that they wouldn't lose their benefits. Benefits planning in general for people with disabilities and employment is a very big issue, and artists want to have more

education on that. They want information on interviewing skills, resume building, portfolio building, and places that will market and promote their art. Next slide.

Thank you for listening. I really hope that you all take some time. Thirteen artists were selected for the KTDDR Visual Art Exhibit. It is here online at this URL. We hope you take some time. I know it's been a long three days, but take some time to really look at the art. It will be there for some time now, even after the conference, and you can read more about the artist's statements. They've all done videos about their work, and you can learn about them more there. Thank you so much for your time.