

Audio Description Transcript: "Do You Like This Installation?"
Cassandra Hartblay

How do we appreciate artwork? How do individuals, each unique from one another, come together to form groups and audiences? How are the tastes and preferences of these groups expressed?

Welcome to the audio description for the digital interface of the ethnographic installation artwork titled "Do You Like This Installation?" The artwork is made and maintained by Cassandra Hartblay, as part of the digital exhibition called "Crippling Cyberspace," curated by Amanda Cachia.

"Do You Like This Installation?" is both an artwork and an experiment. It is intended to draw attention to the ways that the design of social life in both digital and material interfaces can preclude or predispose particular outcomes. Disability activists have long been talking about design in terms of universal design and accessibility. Sometimes these conversations about the material world - the built environment - and sometimes they are about digital and technological interfaces. Occasionally, they are about the ways that these realms are intimately linked, constantly remaking one another.

"Do You Like This Installation?" reminds us that in/access is never complete, that accessibility may mean "sort of" accessible, "a little bit" accessible, or accessible with assistance. It reminds us that access requires engagement, and a decision on the part of the user about how to engage with an environment.

Now I will describe the components of the digital interface.

On the home page of the web interface for *Do You Like This Installation?* is a centered typeface that reads "Project Interface" and, on the next line in yellow cursive text, "Do You Like this Installation?" Beneath this question is a sparse, black text menu bar, and beneath this, further text describing the project. The body text on the home page tells audience members who read it about the proliferation of handicap ramps that, although they look like ramps - that is, they are visibly what Rosemarie Garland Thompson has called "disability things" - they are not functionally very useful assists for moving people with mobility impairments through space. For instance, one picture shows a ramp that is blocked at the stoop by a handrail meant for people taking the perpendicular stairway. Another ramp is just a set of metal rails placed parallel to one another at an arbitrary distance apart, running up and down a staircase; the angle is too steep to safely accommodate a wheelchair user, and even a child's stroller may not have wheels that fit into the narrow rails.

On other pages of the digital interface, audience members can read an artists' statement, view images from sketches of the project and its material installation component, watch a live stream or recorded videos of audience members interacting with the physical installation, and read field notes (a sort of journal kept by the artist about the process of developing and installing this work). Visitors can also click on the "Cast Your Vote" link, to go to a page where they may vote "Yes" (they like the installation) or "No" (they do not like the installation). The voting interface, like the rest of the website, includes the same centered header, minimalist menu, and the text "Do

YOU like this installation? Vote yes or no by clicking the appropriate option below, and casting your vote." The question is presented in typical multiple choice bubble test format, that is, one word appears to the right of a bubble, followed by another word to the right of a bubble on the line below. Even in this minimalist format, this input design may be difficult for persons with certain cognitive profiles to process and engage. Just because the architecture of a digital interface appears accessible to the majority population does not mean that it is accessible for all.

Visitors to the material incarnations of this installation will have a similar, but different experience. Some audience members may visit both the physical and vocal interfaces.

Now I will describe the physical installation.

Upon entering the space or approaching the installation artwork, viewers will encounter a large, handpainted sign with lettering that mimics the digital typeface on the website: *Do You Like this Installation?* it asks. Nearby, they will find a stack of paper slips. On each slip is printed the following text:

ballot

DO YOU LIKE THIS INSTALLATION?

drop your ballot in the appropriate box to cast your vote.

project website: <http://doyoulikethisinstallation.com>

Visitors then have the choice to drop the paper ballot into a clear plexiglass ballot box labelled "YES" or into a similar box labelled "NO." However, the "NO" ballot box is located in the space in such a way as to be out of reach of the average-height adult. It is too high for most people to reach; therefore, by design their only easy choice is to vote yes, or, to abstain from voting altogether. Or, perhaps visitors will find a creative solution to reach the "NO" ballot box.

How will visitors react? Will anyone vote at all? How will online voting results differ from voting results at the material installation sites?

An important component of this project is the "fieldnotes" element - that is, the tracking and data analysis of voting outcomes. As the artist-ethnographer tracks the progress of the voting both online and in the material installations, she turns the work of ethnographic observation into a performative event. The notes that she records draw attention to the way that the process of knowledge creation may or may not overcome the bias of research design. Depending on one's perspective on this question of knowing, she may or may not ultimately be able to determine whether or not the audience has liked this installation.