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THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
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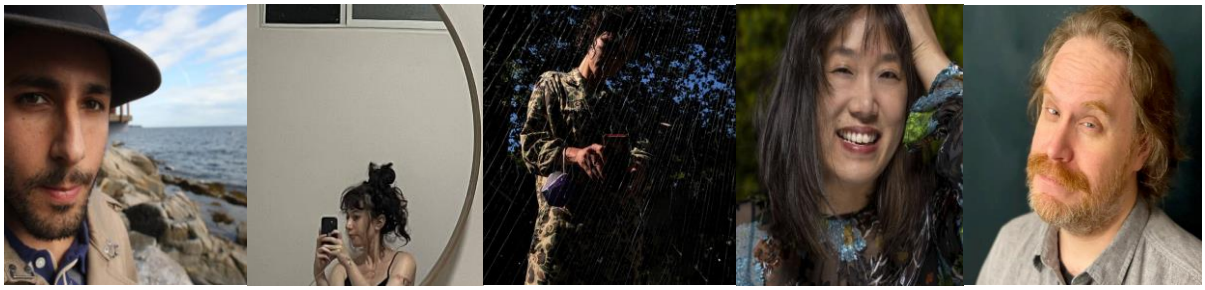
NEW EXHIBITION GROUNDED IN DISABILITY INNOVATION AIMS TO BROADEN ACCESS THROUGH MULTISENSORY MEDIA ART INSTALLATIONS

Experiments in Art, Access & Technology

September 30, 2023 – January 13, 2024
UCI Beall Center for Art + Technology, Irvine, CA



Irvine, CA …Leonardo/ISAST presents *Experiments in Art, Access & Technology* (*E.A.A.T.*), an exhibition premiering new work by artists Meesh Fradkin, Carmen Papalia, Josephine Sales, Andy Slater, and Olivia Ting. The multidimensional installations were developed in Leonardo CripTech Incubator, a California-based art and technology fellowship that includes residencies, workshops, and presentations wherein artists with disabilities reimagine creative technologies through the lens of accessibility. *E.A.A.T.* emerges from a broader program under Leonardo CripTech Incubator that links artists, communities, institutions, and ways of knowing through the full cycle of creative access.

Organized by curators Vanessa Chang and Lindsey D. Felt, with support from program curator Claudia Alick, *E.A.A.T.* will be on view at UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts' Beall Center for Art + Technology (Beall Center) from September 30, 2023 through January 13, 2024. An *E.A.A.T.* partner, Beall Center is free admission and open to the public during the academic year Tuesday – Saturday from 12 noon – 6 pm. Check here for holidays and other closures.

A first-of-its-kind program in the field, *E.A.A.T.* introduces innovative practices in art and technology that arise from—and viscerally embody— lived experiences of disability. Spanning spatial audio, surveillance technologies, gaming, software, haptics, auditory prostheses, and the built environment, *E.A.A.T.* artworks use the multisensory affordances of media arts to widen the horizon of access.

Since the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990, access has been defined by a model of compliance or legal accommodation. But in recent years, artists, activists, educators, and curators

are reimagining access as a creative practice that is transforming how people encounter and engage with art and media.

E.A.A.T. curator and Leonardo/ISAST Director of Programs Vanessa Chang said, “From a participatory audio description that offers multiple renditions of a single work to poetic reinterpretations of captions to access doulas for remote gatherings, these types of innovations spark new sensory possibilities for artistic expression and engagement. Despite their multimodal capacities, many media art tools such as XR, AI, and digital games remain inaccessible to some and have yet to benefit from this creative investigation. Our goal is nothing less than a paradigm shift: cultivating a global network that not only reflects the diversity of human experience, but also charts new creative horizons for the field as a result.”

E.A.A.T. curator and Leonardo Disability and Impact Lead Lindsey D. Felt said, “Innovating for access has always been part of our disabled identity and culture. We believe art-informed access can be an alchemical process like photography when it was first introduced—ushering in new aesthetics and different ways of perceiving the world. These artists deploy access as an expressive form, a liberatory tool, and an experiential technology for sustaining community, inviting visitor interactions that foster dialogue and exchange.”

Comprising the inaugural cohort of CripTech Incubator, the five artists developed their projects in four residencies in California: Beall Center, Santa Barbara Center for Art Science and Technology (SBCAST), RadMad Disability Lab at UC Berkeley, and Thoughtworks Arts, which closed in 2023.

Suspended from the ceiling as multi-tiered wooden chandeliers with steel rods and plastic tubing, Meesh Fradkin’s *babbel* (2023) is a voice-activated installation which lights up and emits sounds in response to words overheard in the gallery space. Powered by an audio dictionary composed of jargon, *babbel* questions positionality in the arts by bringing attention to who is participating in real time. The installation invites visitors to consider how everyday spoken words are hollowed out by use, overuse, or misuse.

Carmen Papalia’s *Pain Pals* (2023), a table-top roleplaying game prototype for accessible character creation and social interaction, prioritizes care and community in an affirming, non-medicalized setting. Motivated by the artist’s exploration of his own chronic pain condition and the radical potential for new understandings of self, place, and community that it has brought, *Pain Pals* provides a space where players can connect around experiences of pain: physical, emotional, and psychic.

Josephine Sales’ *Total Running Time* (2023) illuminates the often-hidden interconnections between disability, telecommunication, and surveillance technologies in prison systems and how they shape our experience of time. The installation evokes a temporal dissonance through its composition of contrasting durations and tempos in four multi-perceptual works: *Rescue*, a large-scale relief, is an anagram of secure; *Pulses* reproduces audio and reverbs from telephone calls through tactile transducers; *Day for Night* uses artificial light run by a security timer to simulate a 24-hour day; and *Maturity,* an auxiliary website. Together, these works disrupt cinematic logic—marked in film as total running time—to reveal the liberatory yet precarious moments that exist outside of linear time.

Challenging ocular-centric infrastructures, Andy Slater *Unseen Sound* (2023) uses audio as material for science fiction worldbuilding. Sounds activate real-time sonic descriptive texts that appear on a monitor in the installation. Just as the sounds encountered in the virtual world are enigmatic, these sonic descriptions guide visitors through another uncharted form of access that at times clarifies and, at other moments, confuses. Embodying blind modalities of being Slater's work reimagines drifting as an aural adventure through a speculative sonic environment.

Olivia Ting's immersive multi-channel projection, *Song Without Words* (2023) renders the gestural continuities between piano, musical conducting, and sign language to redefine the phenomenological experience of listening. Inspired by Beethoven's 'Choral' Symphony No. 9, which he composed when he was deaf, the work comprises three movements (*allegro, scherzo, rondo*) that layer visual and audio compositions like notes in a chord. Projected on translucent panels arrayed as hanging fragments, the videos signal an environment of splintered audial and visual cues that Deaf and hard of hearing individuals inhabit daily.

"The mission of the Beall Center is to support research, exhibitions, and public programs that explore new relationships between the arts, sciences, and engineering and to promote new forms of creation and expression using digital technologies. Over the years, the Beall Center has expanded the use of technology in art from interactive art, art/science collaborations, bio art, politics of race, and computation as a process to create images and poetry, and now, with our long-standing collaboration with Leonardo, we proudly present *Experiments in Art, Access & Technology*. Created in collaboration with engineers, musicians, coders, performers, and other artists, this timely exhibition explores access as a new axis of creative practice in art and technology," said David Familian, Artistic Director, UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts Beall Center for Art + Technology.

"Leonardo's CripTech Incubator artists embody the best of human ingenuity and imagination," said Diana Ayton-Shenker, CEO, Leonardo/ISAST, "We embrace radical access to amplify networks and incubate ideas with the potential for game-changing positive impact."

Further reflections about CripTech Incubator and its work in creative access will be published in a special issue of *Leonardo* in spring 2024.

PROJECT CREDITS

E.A.A.T. is produced in partnership with UCI Beall Center for Art +Technology. CripTech Incubator is built in partnership with RadMad Disability Lab (UC Berkeley); Beall Center for Art + Technology (UC Irvine); Santa Barbara Center for Art, Science and Technology; Ellen Pearlman and Andy McWilliams from the former Thoughtworks Arts; Ground Works with A2RU; Gray Area Foundation for the Arts; Arizona State University; and publication with MIT Press.

Leonardo CripTech Incubator is supported by the California Arts Council Innovations + Intersections Grant; Ford Foundations' Arts Futures Grant; Ability Central; and the National Endowment for the Arts.

About Leonardo
Fearlessly pioneering since 1968, Leonardo serves to convene, research, collaborate, and disseminate best practices at the nexus of arts, science, and technology worldwide. Leonardo's global network of transdisciplinary scholars, artists, scientists, technologists, and thinkers experiment with cutting-edge, new approaches, practices, systems, and solutions to tackle the most complex challenges facing humanity today. As a not-for-profit 501(c)3 enterprising think tank, Leonardo offers a global platform for creative exploration and collaboration reaching tens of thousands of people across 135 countries. Our flagship publication, *Leonardo*, the world's leading scholarly journal on transdisciplinary art, anchors a robust publishing partnership with MIT Press; our partnership with ASU infuses educational innovation with digital art and media for lifelong learning; our creative programs span thought-provoking events, exhibitions, residencies, and fellowships, scholarships, and social enterprise ventures.

About CripTech Incubator
Leonardo CripTech Incubator is an art and technology fellowship for disability innovation. Encompassing residencies, workshops, presentations, publications, and education, this innovation incubator creates a platform for disabled artists to engage and remake creative technologies through the lens of accessibility. Employing a broad understanding of technologies, including prosthetic tools, neural networks, software, and the built environment, CripTech Incubator reimagines enshrined notions of how a body-mind can move, look, communicate.

About the Beall Center for Art + Technology
The Beall Center is an exhibition and research center located at the University of California, Irvine, in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts. Since its opening in 2000, the Beall Center has promoted new forms of creation and expression by building innovative scholarly relationships and community collaborations among artists, scientists, and technologists and by encouraging research and development of art forms that can affect the future. For artists, the Beall Center serves as a proving ground – a place between the artist's studio and the art museum – and allows them to work with new technologies in their early stages of development. For visitors, the Beall Center serves as a window to the most imaginative and creative visual arts innovations. The curatorial focus is a diverse range of innovative, world-renowned artists, both national and international, who work with experimental and interactive media. The Beall Center received its initial support from the Rockwell Corp. in honor of retired chairman Don Beall and his wife, Joan – the core idea being to merge their lifelong passions of business, engineering, and the arts in one place. Today major support is generously provided by the Beall Family Foundation. For more information, visit https://beallcenter.uci.edu.

About the Claire Trevor School of the Arts
As UCI's creative engine, the Claire Trevor School of the Arts has proven itself to be a national leader in training future generations of artists and scholars who go on to inspire audiences in theaters, galleries and concert halls – as well as in entertainment and technology-related venues throughout the world. CTSA combines artistic training with a top-ranked liberal arts education. It is home to the departments of art, dance, drama and music, offering 15 undergraduate and graduate degree programs and two minors. CTSA is currently ranked No. 1 in affordable fine arts, drama/theater, and music degrees by the College Affordability Guide. Courses include extensive studio, workshop, and performance experiences; theoretical and historical studies; and arts and technology practices. CTSA's nationally ranked programs begin with training but culminate in original

invention. The distinguished, international faculty work across a wide variety of art forms and forge interdisciplinary partnerships with others across the campus. For more information, visit www.arts.uci.edu.

About the University of California, Irvine
Founded in 1965, UCI is the youngest member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. The campus has produced three Nobel laureates and is known for its academic achievement, premier research, innovation, and anteater mascot. Led by Chancellor Howard Gillman, UCI has more than 36,000 students and offers 222 degree programs. It is located in one of the world's safest and most economically vibrant communities and is Orange County's second-largest employer, contributing $5 billion annually to the local economy.

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Media Contacts
For additional information, Libby Mark or Heather Meltzer at Bow Bridge Communications, LLC, New York City, info@bow-bridge.com.

Image Captions l to r
Carmen Papalia - image credit: Kristin Lantz
Image alt text *: Against a blurry background of rocks and ocean, a close-up of an olive-skinned man with brown eyes, a dark, close-trimmed beard, and a gray hat.

Meesh Fradkin - image credit: Meesh Fradkin
Image alt text *: A mirror selfie of Meesh. She has brown curly hair tied up in a messy bun and is holding her phone with both hands.

Josephine Sales – image credit: Josephine Sales
Image alt text *: A self-portrait of a shadowed figure wearing camouflage surrounded by green foliage and blue sky seen through a pane of fractured glass.

Olivia Ting - image credit: Olivia Ting
Image alt text *: a headshot of a smiling woman with long straight black hair wearing a black floral top, with her hand on her head.

Andy Slater - image credit: Tressa Slater
Image alt text *: A white man with neglected sandy blond hair and a red and grey beard. He has blue eyes that are trying to make contact with you. He is partially smiling with his mouth closed. He has dimples. His mother says he looks like Beau Bridges.

* Alt text (alternative text) is a concise and descriptive text description added to images in digital content. Its primary purpose is to convey the visual content of an image to individuals who cannot perceive the image itself due to visual impairments, slow internet connections, or other limitations. Because art is a form of expression that should be accessible to all, alt text provides visual information, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their abilities, can understand and engage with the content. Leonardo CripTech Incubator.