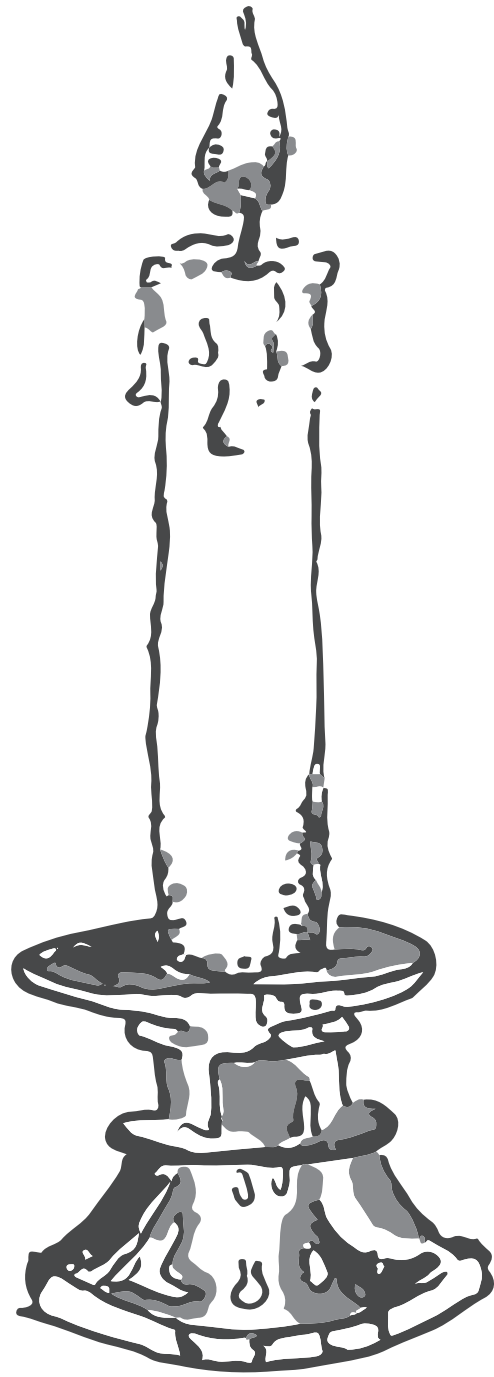




The ____ & ____ Oracle

an offering from members of Sickness Affinity Group

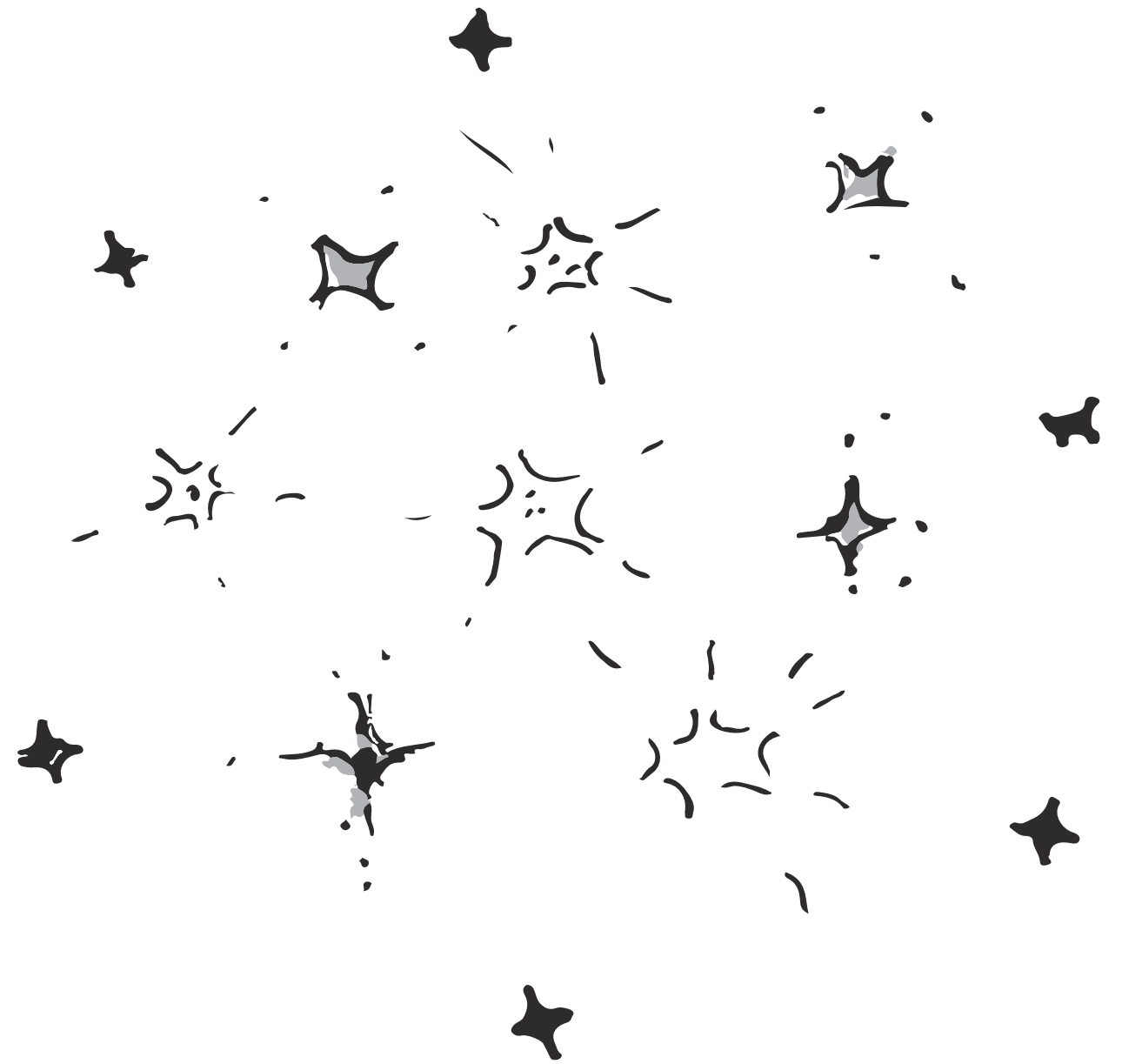
BOOKLET 1



The ____ & ____ Oracle

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BOOKLET 1



The ____ & ____ Oracle

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BOOKLET 1

Introduction:

The ____ & ____ Oracle is a collective voice aiming to support sick, disabled, and care-giving artists and cultural workers with navigating accessibility and working conditions. At the heart of this project is the desire to create space for collectively answering questions, doubts, desires, and calls for advice around topics of accessibility, institutional struggles, and intersectional exclusion. As well as offering advice, The ____ & ____ Oracle shares resources, personal stories, and tools for enacting change.

This publication was produced by five members of Sickness Affinity Group: Clay AD, Frances Breden, Laura G. Jones, Romily Alice Walden and Inga Zimprich in a closed, project-based sub group.

This project has been funded in part by the UdK Graduate School as part of Romily Alice Walden's Graduate School Fellowship.

Sickness Affinity Group consists of chronically ill, disabled and care-giving artists / cultural workers, as well as people working on topics of accessibility and care. Sickness Affinity Group functions as a support group that challenges the competitive and ableist mode of working in the arts. We share experiences and information while prioritizing the well-being and access needs of our group members. Sickness Affinity Group holds open bi-monthly meetings in Berlin and maintains an open email list - sicknessaffinity.org

If you are a curator, cultural worker, or institutional representative reading this document, we hope that you may feel called to enact some of what you learn here in your work moving forward. If you are a sick / disabled / care-giving or otherwise marginalised person reading this document, we hope it may bring you solace, a feeling of connection and a hope for change.

Contents:

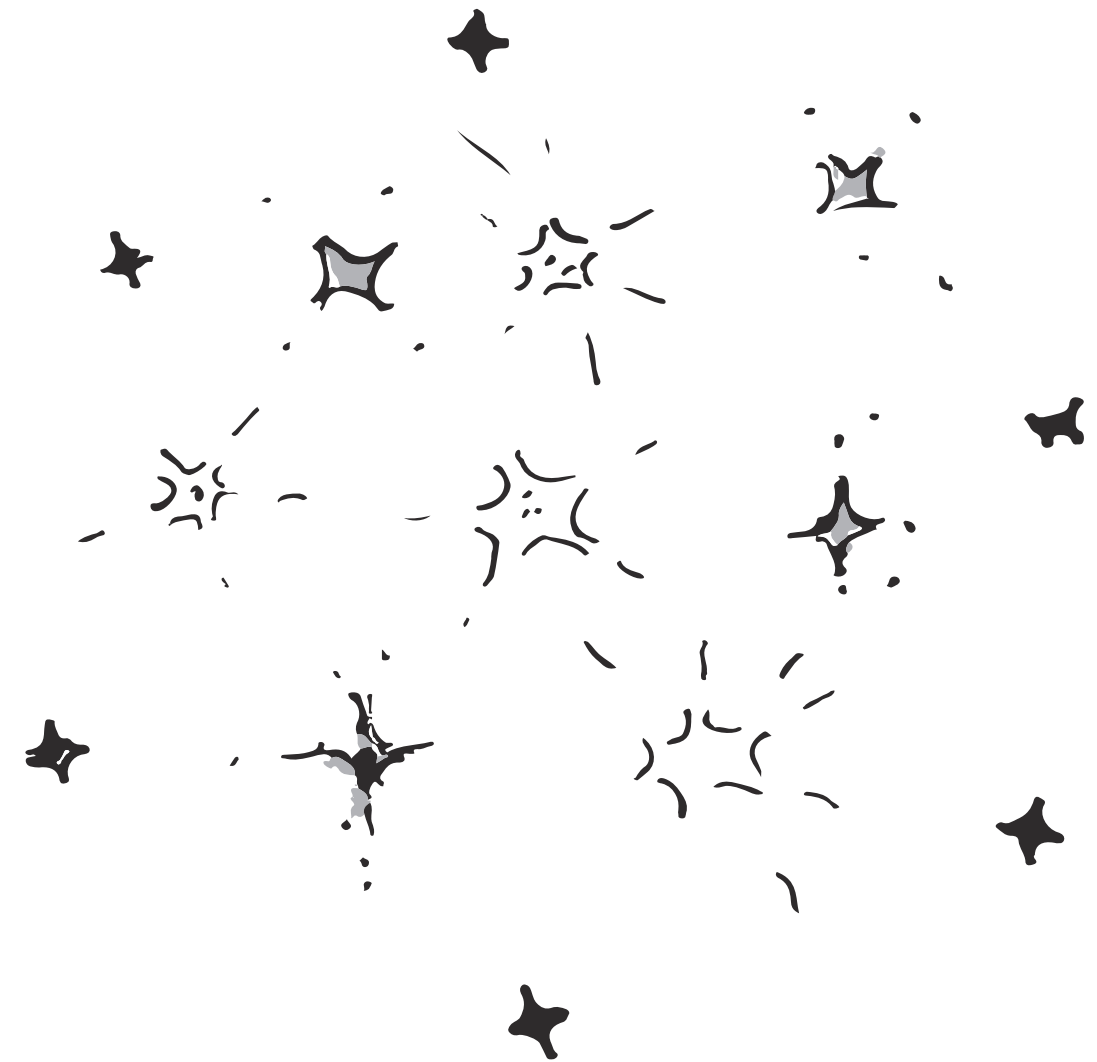
In the spirit of working within our capacities and against capitalism's erasure of care, we present here an incomplete, imperfect and amorphous collection of writings in the form of two booklets and a set of 8 posters.

Booklet 1:
Introduction
Contents
Questions and answers with the Oracle

Booklet 2:
Writing Prompts
A series of questions for institutions engaging with sick, disabled or caregiving artists/cultural workers
An incomplete resource List
Credits and thank yous

These booklets are accompanied by a series of posters that will be wheatpasted around Berlin. We invite you to put up your posters in public/ community spaces or to share them digitally with your community; you'll find a wheatpaste recipe on the reverse of each poster.

We invite you to become your own oracles, to find and cherish your sick and disabled communities, and to take care of each other.



You can contact us at: [xxxxxx](#)

You can find an audio version of this publication at:
www.sicknessaffinity.org/xxx



Q and As with the Oracle:

Dear Oracle,

Lately I feel like there is no time. There are so many things to do - work, school, projects, caring for friends, trying to stay politically engaged... I feel like the first thing I always deprioritize is myself + my health. Do you a) have any ideas for changing this pattern? and b) any tools for feeling abundant rather than scarce about time?

Dear Lovely Juggler,

I'm sorry that you are feeling short on time and I want you to know that you are not alone in this feeling. As an overworked, sick and fatigued little Oracle I have had to find ways to accept that I cannot be everything to everybody all of the time. If, like me, you get consumed by work to-do lists and schedules then my advice is to start including yourself in those. When writing a to-do list for the week, include actions that benefit you and your health, whether that be to take a short walk in the park, order medicine prescriptions, wash some clothes, pull a tarot card or... just... Breathe. By including absolutely everything that needs to be done into your lists and schedule, even if they seem like menial domestic chores or just something that makes you feel good, you get to feel extra productive and successful when you cross them off!

A friend told me that they had been given advice from their therapist to make three realistic goals for each day which can include anything from washing your hair, leaving the house or paying a bill, and that they had found it really useful. This made me realise that most people know if what they are aiming to do in a day is realistic or not... and if it's not realistic then we know that we are already setting ourselves up for feelings of failure and lack of time. Perhaps then what we have to change is the expectations on ourselves. Remember that we are born and raised in a system which thrives on making us feel under pressure to do more than we can or should and it is hard to break out of that mindset.. but possible! As an avid list-maker I have learnt very well that items on my list can easily be transferred to the next week, even the next month (two months.. three?),

and the world will not shatter around me. If you haven't already, I would urge you to read Taraneh Fazeli's essay, 'Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time', this helped me view time in a way which certainly made me feel more comfortable and abundant in regards to time and even radical in my refusals to work within a capitalist pace. Yes bills need to be paid and work needs to happen, this unfortunately cannot be avoided right now as much as I wish it could, but there are ways to do everything we need to in our own time. By slowing down, you can also help others around you to not feel guilty about slowing down too. If we all do this then

maybe we can sloooowly change the culture around working and time pressure together. And when it feels like there is too much to do, there is no shame in sharing the load and asking for help. Remember, you are always doing enough, even when you are doing nothing. Inactivity and rest allows space for many delicious things that come with being a human; imagination, reflection and sensations! In 60 seconds your body hair collectively grows 1.1 inches longer, your heart pumps 1.5 gallons of blood and you breathe 15-20 times... that's already quite a lot! No need to do more than that if you don't feel like it, at least for a few moments..

<3 bb Oracle <3

Dear oracle,

I shared my access doc with a group and a lot of people did not reply. What does this mean and what should I do? Do they think I'm too demanding/self-centered? Do they feel too awkward to reply? And if so, should I challenge them? Or do I let it go so as to not make myself feel even more othered/excluded etc?

**yours,
sad and lonely**

Dear Sweet and Lovely,

If you still want to continue your relationship with them, I think it is in your best interest to challenge them. I am sorry to say it because I know it is extra work. They should know the emotional weight of not being seen, answered, or validated when you do something vulnerable. If they think you are too demanding and self-centred for having access needs, they have an incredibly twisted understanding of ability, productivity, and buying into the concept of a stiff upper lip. If these are people you want to invest in, you unfortunately will have to challenge these ideas of theirs. I also must add, I doubt that that is what they think of you. They could be overwhelmed with fear of saying the wrong thing, especially by email. We can be compassionate for that while still challenging it. Your access doc is not a burden. You have offered them a gift by expressing your needs, opening up room for them to reflect on and express their own needs.

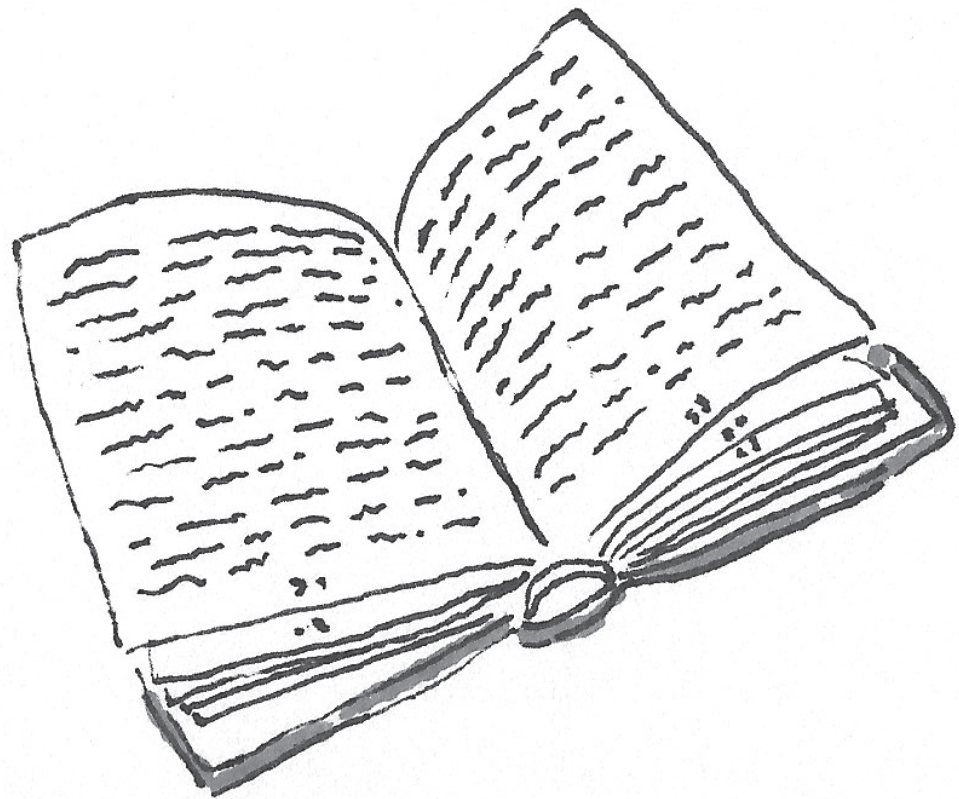
Yours,
The ever-extra-working Oracle

Dear vulnerable cultural worker,

Autsch! I believe I can feel you. I recall Johanna Hedva saying that if we want to engage in supporting each other we need to be aware that this takes time and it costs time. If we ask for help and want to help each other, we need to actually set time aside to make that possible. This is time we all feel we can't spare in our busy, overworked, underpaid cultural production mode with care commitments/sick time. Yet (that clever person continued:) the time we withdraw from time spent otherwise is anticapitalist time, because we deduct it from the time claimed by the paradigm of productivity. But even if some of us are managing to understand that, we all have a hard lesson to learn to actually begin to ask for help.

It seems that once again you are at the forefront of sharing your vulnerability – and I would like to thank you for that. Even if you direct that call towards a community that seems to learn those lessons at a very slow pace, it certainly is committed to learning. I wish I could prop you up with heating blankets, flowers, spiced tea and keep you warm long enough until we, the community surrounding you, has made enough space in their lives to come forward and accommodate needs when voiced. To communicate capacities, limits and availability in a straight forward and engaged way. I believe we are a community to be trusted, to be counted on. But maybe we need to be told more than once, more than three, more than ten times. I think it would be a good exercise for us to take turns in reminding us and holding each other accountable for the ways we commit to each other. I'd love to have a conversation about what we can bare until we arrive there together and bring that into the centre of our community.

Your slow, resting, resonating Oracle



Dear Oracle,

Everytime I engage with an institution/exhibition etc professionally, I am left feeling angry and let down by having to teach them about access needs. How can I learn to feel more comfortable about occupying this position of complainer / demander / confronter? Or how can I NOT HAVE to do this work & instead be able to focus on my actual work (that I am there to do).

Yours, unhappy complainer

Dear Demander,

From your letter I'm wanting to send you a sick, crip army of all those who came before and got through. Ancestors and the living who have your back and understand. This is not to say "buck up" and deal with it, but more to say I wish you to not be alone in these moments and feel the collective power that is with you, even when the institution (and most structures of capitalism) makes you feel alone and demanding in your needs.

Art institutions and the general art market profits off the profit of individuated single "artistic genius", and uses it to their advantage that art labor is extremely unregulated. Every institution's treatment is different and consequences for bad behavior difficult in terms of power balance and coming out, because I assume you also want to keep getting work. Calling out and causing scenes can make this difficult. We all know those who have been labelled difficult to work with because of their politics and because they spoke out against unjust situations. SO, I want to be aware of those consequences, but also to those of your health.

**Complaining, Demanding,
Confronting -- these all take a
lot of energy. I wonder how to
collectivize the figure Sara Ahmed
called the feminst killjoy so she's
not all alone in those big halls of
power.**

Here is a spontaneous tangible list -- what about an institutional hit list. Infomation sharing in your network. Anonymous pads that can be added to, fact checked and shared. A complaining support group where you can forward every bullshit email and get feedback and advice quickly. What would it look like to advoate for one another, in the style of a patient advocate ie bringing someone to the doctors office so they can bear witness and accompany you in the demands of getting your needs met?

Maybe if this load is spread, the labor of change, the emotional weight shared there would be more space to do the actual work. This is just a theory and I'm just a single oracle. But as I like to do, I'm thinking of the image of a large fish chasing many small fish, and then underneath the small fish have organized themselves to be bigger than the big fish as a group. Text reading "Organize!" In whatever small and large ways feel possible, even if thats just calling a friend for support.

May our voices all be in the Chorus of Complaints,
Yr Oracle

My Strong and Powerful Confronter,

I guess that was the original proposal of this project, to have a collective document to point to that institutions would be obliged to read through and reflect on before working with you. This is a beautiful idea, and with some cases it could work. But, honestly, I think we know that many would simply not take it to heart. They would say they would, and of course skim it, not really look, and say that they have understood it. Could this document be helpful even in this case, so when it comes out later that they have refused to learn, you have something to point back to? A collective voice, something to help you feel less isolated?

Alternatively, could we use the technique we use when we are afraid to go to the doctor or an Amt, and bring a friend or advocate? Could calling out to a group, asking if someone has time and capacity to be there, help you feel less singled out in your role as the complainer? It's not ideal but I know I would be willing to step in and do some emotional or educational labour for a friend if I had the capacity at the moment.

At the end of the day, these two things I proposed aren't taking the burden off of you, or "us". I see your anger and disappointment and I hold space for it. FUCK THE SYSTEM. My mother once told me her favourite teaching evaluation she ever got just contained the words "awesome bitch". Maybe when you are cast into this role of confronter, you can share the story with me, and I can tell you that the confronter is often an awesome bitch.
Your Bitchy Oracle B-)

My sweet oracle,

A Berlin art institution has to either renew its rental agreement or move. They are in an inaccessible space for wheelchairs, but they don't want to move to, say, a new fancy building built for them, because it would be expensive and they feel it would support Berlin's unethical developer/real estate industry. WHATS THE RIGHT ANSWER?

-rental rowdy

Dear Rental Rowdy,

I would wonder if there is THE RIGHT ANSWER for this question as I think there are many parameters in between supporting gentrification and staying in an inaccessible space.

If they have the luxury of being Able to afford to have a building built for them, then why can they not use this money to find an accessible space that is already built? I would really question their thinking of - either a great “ethical” inaccessible space (these words cannot exist next to each other! There is no ethical, inaccessible space!!!!), OR a space that supports the developer/real estate industry. Why do the two have to be mutually exclusive? This positioning frames these two needs as mutually exclusive: accessible OR gentrifying, implying that an accessible space somehow has to be bad for the city. This makes me feel tired.

Are we really so unable to find new solutions? Are there not ways to manage through these situations without placing needs in a hierarchy? Is there really a perfect right choice here? I think not. But I think there is a wrong choice - ie. to do nothing... suggesting to stay in an inaccessible space because there are no accessible spaces that are ethical is a GIANT RED FLAG. It feels very boring to me. I would ask them to do better to use their obvious resources and power as an institution to find a space which is both ethical, accessible and supportive for the city. And if there is not an accessible building perfectly ready made then use some of the money they obviously have (or could get) to make it accessible or make their own space accessible - a lift, a ramp, comfortable seating, disabled parking etc. etc. etc. They can do it! They must only be willing to try and not to fall back on this habit of making excuses of why its ok to exclude disabled people...

With love and anger,
Your oracle

Dearest Oracle,

I like to work informally and with friends creating personal and longlasting relationships. However I worry this sometimes makes my work inaccessible, because not everyone or every kind of person is my friend. How can I address this tension of close commitment and open to the public? **NEED ADVICE!**

HARRIED, FRIENDLY, AND UNCERTIAN, Berlin

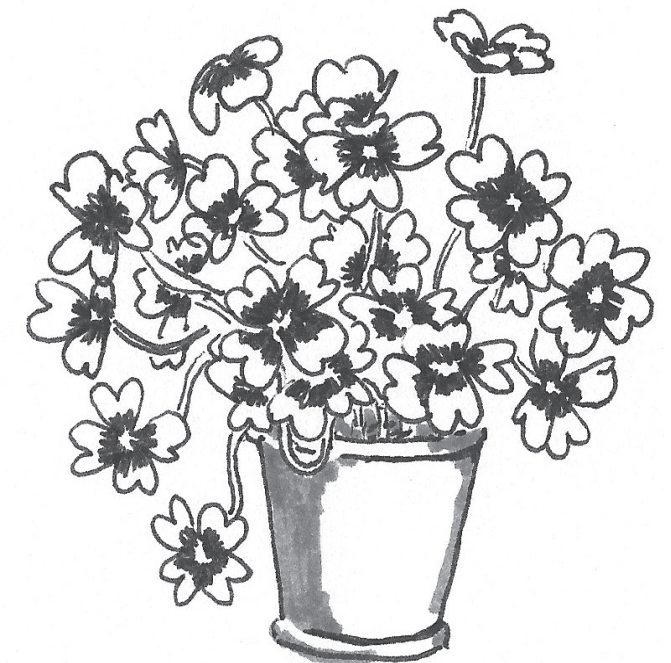
Dear frantic angelic being,

A close friend told me decades ago that an orgy never happens with everyone at once but effectively you will engage somewhere with someone first. Sometimes we aim to accomplish all the right things at once and can't go deep with anything anymore, out of the fear of missing out somewhere else. You know, just how strolling through a park helps you settle thoughts you're busy with, lived relation is the place to deepen and intensify concepts we believe in. So yes, growing relations takes time and this is the place where we can truly explore things we want in our lives:

trust beyond differences, sharing and making accessible spaces, living through conflict and crises together, developing solidarity with each other.

However, Taraneh Fazeli has been applying some of Mia Mingus' thoughts on Access Intimacy asking: How do we determine when differences between collaborators are not just there because we simply don't jive with each other, but because we have troubles working across differences due to different experiences caused by classism, ableism, racism?

My advice to you is to feel close and sense your connections to others with your full being in your collaborations – this needs time.



Yet if you have spontaneous feelings of irritation or alienation with people, check carefully whether there isn't something to that encounter which you yourself could unpack, a lesson to learn that you've been postponing? If we engage in relations that ask of us to question ourselves more, we might be able to not end up in crowds of people who by coincidence all look like us, live like us, dress like us, earn like us and think like us.

Hope to see you there,

a precarious oracle working extra hours on a Saturday morning

Dear oracle,

What should I do when an institution I work with and educate then does not implement any of the access measure I fought for going forward? eg in their future work?

**Yours,
sick and tired**

Dear exhausted co-worker,

I recently had a conversation with a curator of a high reputation venue in Berlin (state-funded, high professional level, high visibility) who told me that the director had decided in that year to officially not make accessibility a priority of that institution. The reasons were that the cultural production was already taking place under lots of financial pressure and people were already overworked so that there simply were no resources to „in addition“ make events accessible.

To me this is a hard core example of ableism in institutions. I know a number of young to mid career female-identified cultural workers who have hard times working up the career ladder in this place. I recall getting into fights with staff when, in the frame of an artistic project, we made use of their microwave-cabinet which is wrongly called a kitchen.

I am wondering how we can expect and accept politically meaningful cultural production to come out of institutions in which people are suppressing their needs and feelings, where everyone is under hierarchical and patriarchal pressure and where clearly the institution cannot recognize and therefore work properly within its capacities? An ableist structure is that: Shaming people for voicing needs (rest, withdrawal, cooking, breaks, community, time off), making people function at high productivity peaks short term (long work days, bureaucratic regulations and strict hierarchical protocols how to do things), making people work under pressure and not having developed ways to follow up on the effects of its productions responsibly (in dialogue with communities they were addressing for instance). An ableist institution is that which perceives needs of its members, participants, staff and audience “additional” vs integral.

Working beyond the ableist paradigm means to question production to a deeper extent: Would less events a year be enough to function as a full program? Would cutting the programming of such an institution in half generate space for a more sincere commitment to discourse put forward? Can it take into account how much time people need to engage with a question, a topic, a collaboration and can it pay people for their work accordingly in a more sustainable way? Can it invest into making more people feel more welcome in the space it is creating because this is inherently the purpose of its work?

Don't get me wrong, I don't think any ramp, any access info, any translation to Sign Language or Simple Language, any offer of day-care or any inquiry into sensitivities, allergies and the like are dispensable. What I hope for though is that we learn within these institutions and beyond them to fully comprehend the loss and abrasion this kind of productivity-gearred mode of working produces. Accessibility is within the work culture of an institution, it is also sensitivity towards the internal needs, internal lacks and what is internally suppressed. It is a process that goes through and through. I know it is hard work, it scares us and it makes us sad to confront whom, how and for how long ableist institutions have been excluding, what ableist institutions have been suppressing.

You told me about Andrew Gurza's podcast Disability after Dark in which he says "Accessibility is not whether people with disability can enter a building, but how we feel when we are inside it." I am sure we will go aaalllll the way and dismantle those places from without and within.

As it says on Marcuse's gravestone: Weitermachen!



Dear Oracle,

I've always felt only half in the art world, mostly because it felt so hard to feel okay there. Lately I have been realizing how key artmaking and creativity were to me as a young person as a therapeutic coping mechanism. It feels hard to integrate all the parts of myself - the young person who felt so hopeful about art and my adult self now who is quite cynical about the structure much of it lives within. I always find pockets of hope and lightness, friends and spaces of imagination, but sometimes I get so depressed about it and want to just leave completely. What do you think?

Sincerely,
Dreaming of a World without "Artists"

My sweet confused child,

I feel you. "Art" as a concept of something separate from "life", "art" as a white Western concept, and "artists" as sublime beings who bring us this rare substance, sucks. I think it is good you are working to break down this category.

I have two suggestions.

1: are there other things in life that give you that feeling of hope or therapeuticness? It's OK if that thing changed from art to something else. Follow that, and keep some pressure off art having to feel so meaningful for you. (At the same time, remember that we can become disenchanted with anything after a while, and try not to only chase the new and exciting.)

2: Connect with people at the beginning of their artistic journey, who still feel that hope and coping connection. They could be young, or "amateur" (a word I use here to mean, doing it for love?). They're out there.

Your pockets of hope are something to stay oriented toward.

With love and compassion,
Your Oracle

My dear challenged comrade,

I understand the confusion you are suffering and it is true, the doubts you're having are gnawing away the pedestal that thing called art is placed upon. Yet all that is lacking to get that fuzzy picture sharp is perhaps a grain of marxist theory. Unfortunately it will be a disappointing picture, I am afraid.

One of the first things we learn when we decide to make our creative impulses our future profession – thus mostly right upon entering art school – is that that what we do cannot be done by everyone. It takes a few years, an unspoken, intransparent and painful process, until we have taken in the ruling aesthetics in capitalism, which are partly informed by racism and misogyny. Anaïs Héraud-Louisadat, an appreciated friend and colleague, once said: 'How come we accept a photograph of an empty modernist swimming pool built in the 1970s as a valid expression of melancholia, while we learn to quickly read a performance by a female identified artist involving cloths and fluid as embarrassing or „just too much“?' The answer is: That's art education. It is that simple and it is that sad.

The second lesson we learn is that what we do is not for everyone either. We learn to integrate and embody that places of culture are for educated people, for people who know something about what is shown, who know the discourse, who have background information and a refined taste, who already know somebody, who have already read a book or two by the lecturer on stage, and most importantly we learn that places of culture are for people who know how to behave in an exhibition venue or lecture space, including how to mingle and small talk at art openings or how to ask a question only to represent yourself. (French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu worked out the function of art as class distinguishment in great detail)

If we are making art at the age of 30 or 40 “successfully” it is more often than not an indicator that some intersection of privilege is playing out. Think of the acceptance or lack thereof that we took up a profession first of all which most likely won't ever pay off; the encouragement or lack thereof in our families of origin to take up art altogether; the financial support or lack thereof to get through times without, with low or with precarious income (=most or all the time); think about the racialized and gendered expectations or lack thereof what kind of art we should be making, what kind of topics we should be addressing and what media we should employ. Given the enormous competitiveness and self-exploitation in the art field, most of the time ableist privilege is at work, too. The practice that has once filled you with joy and has inspired your dreams turned into something you need to be the best at, you need to be considered interesting or relevant doing and in consequence it means a life of competition and rivalry if you want to earn a living of it. The art works you are able to make today are most likely and subconsciously made for, are accessible to and are understood by elitist groups (including the one we share) under competitive relations and under precarious working conditions.

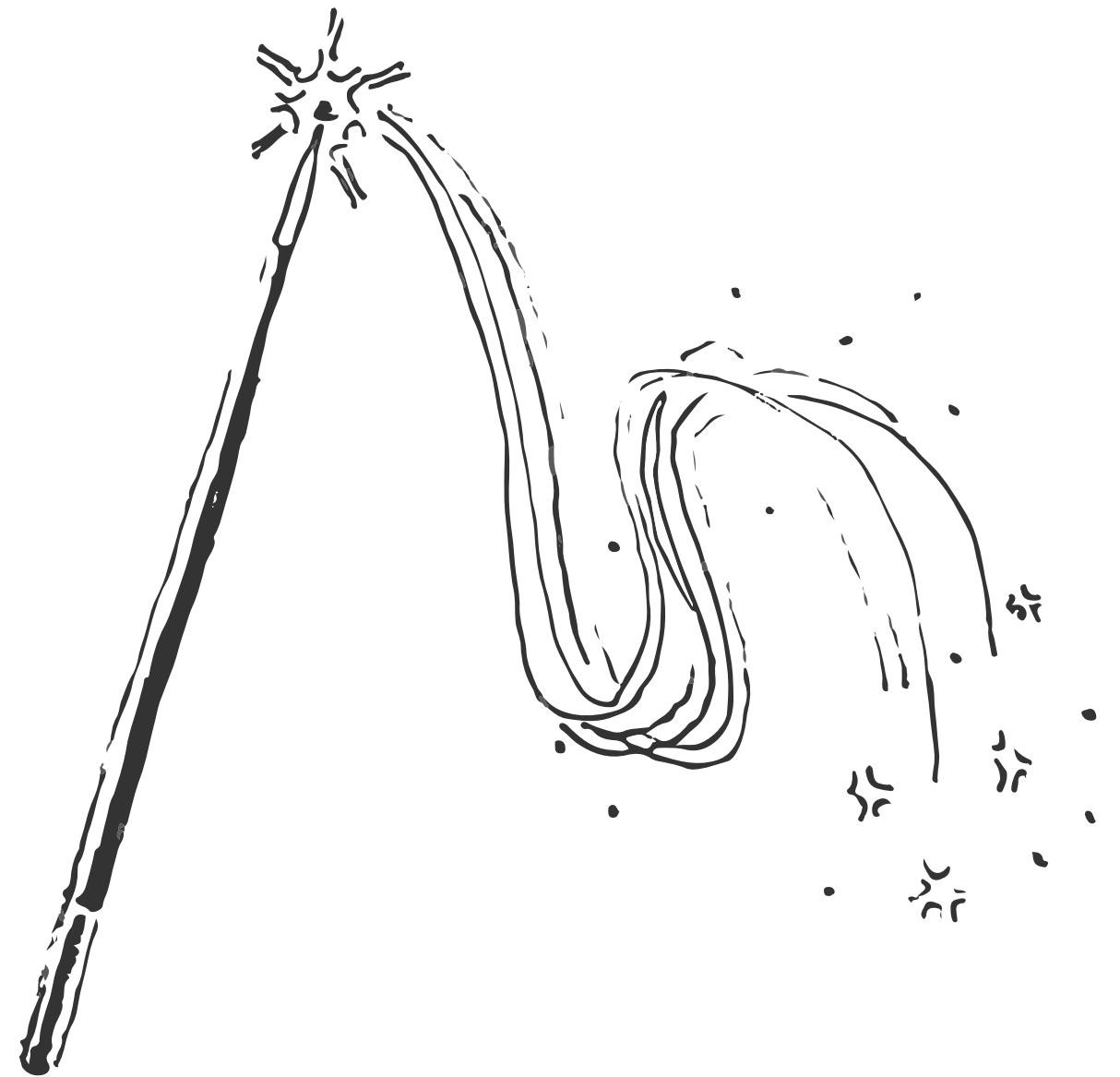
What has come of our dreams of creativity, of art as a transforming, imaginative, political and connecting tissue, a social bond that brings people together? What has become of the dreams we had when we were fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, the dreams that made us leave our medium sized-towns and provinces? (At least they made us go somewhere.) Dreams of people meeting up in cultural centers in big cities, sharing information and engaging in creative processes in an equal and accessible manner? In my dream that center had a neighborhood radio station, there were always some people glazing their self made pottery or dying their hair, while someone else might have been banner painting or writing in their diary.

I was about to end this response on this disillusioned note. And no reason to not be disillusioned. It sounds bad. And it is that bad. But one evening I zapped around during a long oracle night shift and I came across an interview recorded during the 1990ies with the 83-year old communist and former GDR actress Steffi Spira. It was like the answer to my answer. It went like this:

“Günther Gaus: What do these communist teachings, whose degeneration we all have come to witness, what makes those communist ideals in your life -- a truly long life, which I have aimed to briefly sketch here --, what makes those communist ideals so central, so important in your life?

Steffi Spira: Well, I will tell you. I will respond to you with a quotation [from a theater piece] by Schiller, from Don Carlos (smiles). He lets Posa say to the king: ‚And tell him he should respect the dreams of his youth once he will grow up to be a man.’ I can’t help it: I respect the dreams my young self has had.”

Warmly,
Your Retired Socialist Cultural Worker



My Oracular Guide,

Am I just kidding myself to think that publicly funded art can be “artivism” “activist” etc? Why don’t I just put my efforts to actual political activism?

CURATOR KIDDER

Dear Confused Curator,

On the one hand, I think the work of pushing politics within art has broadened the conversation and is resulting in more visibility for issues and marginal artists. Many methods and means are necessary in the complete take down that the patriarchal, racist, ableist debt sucking capitalist western world needs. I’m thinking of Diane di Prima’s poem “Revolutionary Letter #8”

“NO ONE WAY WORKS, it will take all of us shoving at the thing from all sides to bring it down. “

On the otherhand I think there are many layers and scales happening in the art world. Scales of economies, priveledges, all particuarly affecting individuals and creating the system-ic hammock we’re all swinging in, and sometimes I feel like the politics is less the content of the work (though extremely important), but the politics of positioning within the art world.

I’m particuarly thinking about the recent boycott of the Whitney Binnual in NYC by eight artists in the biannual. The eight withdrew their work from the prestigious show to boycott the board member Warren Kanders, owner of a company called Safari-land, producer of teargas which is being used at the Mexico-US border as well as against Palestinians. This action resulted in the stepping down of Warren Kanders a few days after the artists released their statement.

A sentiment that was pushed by the organizers of the boycott afterwards was a simple one -- that though is difficult to feel as a possibility during this time of precarity -- it is possible to say no, and that the refusal, can also be a powerful political gesture.

But ultimately I am of the belief that if you want to feel politically engaged, and engaged in life its nice to spread your energy -- maybe join a group organizing around a political issue, go to a demo or volunteer somewhere. Integrating this into your life, finding ways of being that bring engagement and connection, might take some pressure off your art to hold all your politics and feelings about the state of the world -- weaving and working with some of the confusion the current situation. But then again I'm an Aquarius moon with many Sagittarius placements so spreading myself in different ways of working is a personal strategy anyway. You'll find the way that works for you. To me it seems important to keep in mind your intention to curate, why this work is important to you, and find some positive examples of how you see this as potentially political work -- and keep that path in mind while going about the work.

In solidarity and love,
yr Oracle



Dear SAG oracle,

Thank you for the chance to turn to you for advice and wisdom. My question: I have been invited to a high scale art event that deals with questions around the body, disability and accessibility. I am an able bodied white cis person. What are the many ways in which I could redistribute resources, counteract powerplays, teach/relate to the institution/bring in my community? Should I withdraw my participation?

Your Privileged Doubter

Dearest wisdom seeker,

As your disabled oracle, I have to tell you that it makes me very happy when abled people take the time to fight for and care about sick and disabled people. You are somebody who has years of experience researching and working on these topics, and because of this I know that there is a real foundation of knowledge and expertise that you can share FROM the position of an abled person who chooses to care deeply about disabled people and the way that communities care for each other. The history of your work and your dedication to these topics serves as evidence of your real care, attention and passion for these topics. Your work is NOT tokenistic, for fashion, cool points, cultural clout etc. and neither does it use disabled people as objects or metaphors with which to further your own career. Because of this I would suggest that you can feel confident and capable (while always interrogating and curious of your motives as we must all be!) in your ability to perform allyship in a Genuine and Generative way.

The issues I have with nondisabled people taking up space working on these topics come about when these nondisabled people USE disability and sick and disabled people. They mine our experiences for personal gain. They expect us to educate them and then benefit off our hard-won knowledge. They do not work With us but About us - this reminds me of the infamous phrase of the disability rights movement in the UK - NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US! (also another favourite of mine was PISS ON PITY!) These people's work does not promote change or understanding but spectacle. It does not bring us closer to community and culture but pushes us further away, making us exotic, other, strange, weird, separate, pitiable, inspiring etc. etc.

Your work however invites us in. It helps both disabled and abled people to examine and feel in touch with their own vulnerabilities and fallibilities. It helps all people to connect with and to concepts of ability, the body, care, time, labour and community. We need so much more of this connection and this work in the world. We need you! Please do not give up on doing this fantastic work that spreads compassion and sensitivity to being alive within a body and the complexities of caring for ourselves, our bodies and our communities in this strange and difficult time to be alive.

All this said, when you are in these positions as an abled person or being invited to take up space at an event that is specifically disability focused, I think there is a responsibility to ask: "who else is working on this? are the majority of those invited disabled? are the people in positions of power disabled? are the people receiving funding sick and disabled? if not, then why not?" In the same way that we must do this if we have white privilege, I would ask you to use your able bodied privilege to interrogate the dynamics of this event. In some cases this may mean saying to the curator "you need to hire a disabled person and I will step away from the project." I trust that you will know if this is needed or not in each individual situation. I would guess from knowing you that you would not want to work anyway at an event that claimed to centre disability and then hired no disabled people!!

But perhaps also there is potential for generative practice even within these deeply problematic frameworks. Can you interrogate and critique from the inside? As perhaps this would be better than removing yourself from a problematic project only to be replaced by another abled person with less care than you. Can you wield your abled privilege as an opportunity to educate? As an oracle who struggles so much with a lack of energy, I do not have the power to fight with these institutions for access measures, I am already worn down by my sickness and by the ableism that feels so hurtful and painful to be on the receiving end of. Do you have some energy to muscle into these spaces and fight for those of us who are too weak and tired to do so? Are you able to leave the event/institution/curator more caring/aware/accessible than they/it was before, even by a small amount? If yes, then I thank you.

I have no doubt that you will continue to make beautiful, impactful and powerful work.

I have every faith in you my sweet sagittarius.

<3
your hopeful oracle

