

Senior editor's commentary

This issue is an important landmark in the building and development of the international discourse on disability studies, arts, and education. The articles in this issue are based on the First International Conference on Disability Studies, Arts, and Education (DSAE), held from September 28th to September 29th, 2017, at Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland. The conference brought together practitioners, activists for disability rights policies, scholars from various fields of academic research, students, artists, art educators and members of the disability and crip art communities who shared an interest in, or whose work addressed, the intersections and interplay between critical disability studies, arts, and education. One-hundred-and-six people across the world participated, 48 of whom were presenters. The scope of the conference included various art forms, such as visual arts, performing arts, dance, and film, as well as different contexts of education, such as primary education, higher education, professional artists' education and public pedagogy.

One of the aims of the conference was to increase critical discussion in the university towards more just, critical and ethical societies around the world. First-person accounts of disability were heard in many of the presentations and were the perspective of critical work for many scholars, artists and educators. For the keynotes, Jennifer (Eisenhauer) Richardson, Kaisa Leka and Amanda Cachia all brought their own artistic and scholarly voices from different perspectives of arts, disability studies, research and education. The conference will continue its life: the Second International Disability Studies, Arts and Education conference will be held from October 3rd to October 5th, 2019, in the Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, U.S.

As the conference organizer, and as the senior editor of this journal, I was delighted when John Derby and Alice Wexler decided to edit this special issue. Both their work has had such a remarkable impact on the field of art education. They have done valuable work by introducing

disability studies from perspectives that are partially different, yet partially joint. It was sad-
dening and heart-breaking to hear of John's recent death, not only because of the loss of such a
significant scholar and pioneer for DSAE, but also because of losing a friend.

I came to know John when he was still a graduate student in Ohio State University. At that
time, I was also working on my dissertation, which included collaborative artistic work with a
person with autism. We clearly had a common interest from early on, and this common interest
took us to many conferences, seminars, and publication projects, and most importantly led to
many inspiring conversations. John's seminal article, *Disability Studies and Art Education*,
published in *Studies in Art Education*, 2011, is widely used by students and scholars in many
universities nationally and internationally. He is one of the main initiators of the Disability
Studies NAEA interest group. (NAEA is the National Art Education Association for North
America). As Alice writes in her introduction, John's impact on the field has been unforgettable
and significant.

John was invited to Aalto University several times. He was the visiting scholar in one of
the symposia of FADS (Finnish Art Education Doctoral Studies). He was invited to examine
a student thesis, and he took part in the First International DSAE Conference as one of the
conference committee members. It was always a pleasure to work with John. I am left missing
John's sense of humour, his kindness, and his lively thinking.

John's work will continue to live through many of the articles of this issue. I want to thank
Alice for finalizing the editing of this special issue alone. I understand that it cannot have been
an easy task.

In Helsinki September 30th,

Mira Kallio-Tavin